

THE HALF-DIMELIBRARY

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The Cruise of the Sea Wolf;

OR, THE BOY DUELIST. ❖ ❖ ❖ BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

ALONE WITH DEATH.

Out from the shadows of the land glided a small sloop-rigged craft, with all sail set, and headed for the open sea.

Forward, pacing with a quick, nervous step, every instant turning in his short walk, like a tiger in his cage, was a tall man, attired in sailor garb.

In the small space astern, his hand resting on the tiller that held the little vessel on its course, sat another man, his eyes alternately ranging from the open sea to the tall form forward.

Like the other, he was also attired as a seaman, and these two were all that were visible upon the little sloop.

Suddenly the man forward hesitated, seized the lee-stay with an iron grasp, and muttered:

"He shall do as I wish. We have gone too far to hesitate now, and gold I must have. He shall go with me—or—or—yes, I'll hurl him into the sea and go alone. Brentford!" and he walked aft to where the helmsman sat at the tiller.

"Ay, ay, shipmate; what is it?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Brentford—you must put back to the land and at once," said the other, firmly.

"Look here, boatswain, you do not wish a quarrel with me, do you?"

"No, if you do as I ask you. I tell you, Brentford, two leagues yonder is the home of a man I hate; he has gold in plenty, and we can get it, if you only have the backbone to do as I say."

"Look here, boatswain, I have this very night gone with you upon an expedition that will hang us both if we are caught; trusting you, and feeling sorry that because you had been a little fast, the old man had cut you off with a shilling, I went with you to take that which I believed justly your own.



UPON HER DECK WENT ON A MAD STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO
DESPERATE MEN.

"Well, here we are, heading seaward in an open boat, fugitives from justice, and a bag of gold and some silver our only booty; and if we strike the coast anywhere within a hundred miles, we will be taken, and you know the result."

"Why throw words away, Brentford? I know all this, and I urge, now that we have gotten ourselves into a scrape, to risk more. Land where I ask you and we can get several thousands more in gold."

"No, boatswain, I want no more blood money. I am going out to sea until I drop the land and then head down the coast."

"I tell you, Brentford, you must go," and the man came close to his companion.

Then commenced a fierce struggle between the two.

Over and over the small deck they rolled, one cursing, the other breathing hard, and each striving for mastery, each seeking to take the other's life.

At length the struggle grew fiercer, and then one was raised in the arms of the other and hurled into the sea.

With a shudder he went to the helm, and once again the little sloop was put on her course seaward—once again a hand rested upon her helm; the same hand that had rested there before the struggle. Brentford had proved the victor.

But he whom he had hurled into the sea was not, as the victor had believed, dead.

He had been powerless to resist being hurled from the deck, and sunk far down into the dark waters.

But at length he made an effort to rise; the cool waters revived him, and he came to the surface, but far from the little sloop—too far for him to swim in his weakened condition.

Realizing that he had but one chance for life, to gain strength and noticing that the

sloop still lay in the wind, as though his victor held no power over her, he turned upon his back, inflated his chest with wind, and began to float.

For many minutes he thus floated, while his strength and nerve came back to him, and he determined to once more seek the vessel, and, if his victor was powerless to prevent, slay him; if he had also recovered his strength, he would come to terms with him, and thus bide his time until he could put him out of the way.

But, as he glanced over the waters he beheld, to his horror, the little sloop fully a quarter of a mile away, and dashing swiftly along under full sail. "Sloop ahoy! ahoy!" he yelled in thrilling tones. "Brentford! oh, Brentford! do not leave me here to die!"

Still the sloop held on her course and the rising wind blew his words back in his throat.

"Ahoy the sloop! Brentford, good Brentford, come back for me!"

Yet no answer—no sign that his cry was heard, or, if heard, was heeded.

"Oh, God! must I die here—alone on the waters—alone here with death? It is horrible."

"Brentford, ahoy! Oh! curses, he cannot hear me."

"Ay, he hears me, but heeds me not—he leaves me here to die. How cruel is man to his fellow-man! Curse him, if I live I will—but I cannot live; I must go down here to my death: it is two leagues to the land—I cannot even see the cliffs."

"Oh, God! what an end—what a death to die!" and covering his face with his hands, as if to shut out his cruel fate, the poor wretch sunk down beneath the dark waters.

CHAPTER II. BOAT AHoy!

Not until the water above his head oppressed him with its weight, did the man make a struggle to rise to the surface, and then he arose once more upon the waves, clinging to life with that tenacity of purpose natural to all, even when there is no hope of success.

A bold, strong swimmer, he struck out over the waters, heading landward, though there was little hope in his heart of ever reaching the shore: still, as long as he had strength he would fight against death.

For half-an-hour he had been swimming on, his strokes still strong, yet weakening every minute, for he was yet unnerved from his struggle with his companion: but before him he could see no trace of the land, and he cried in agony:

"What if the wind should have changed and I be swimming from the shore: but I will swim on; I will not die."

"Curse those clouds that obscure the stars from me. If I could only see the stars I would know exactly where lay the land."

And on he swam, his strokes becoming less steady, his body numbed by the length of time he had been in the water.

"Oh, God! I believe I am dying," and he cast a hurried glance around him.

Instantly from his lips broke a wild cry of joy, for not far away was visible a small sail. "Ha, ha, ha, I will not die then. It is Brentford returned for me; he would not let me die alone on the sea. Good, noble Brentford! he has come to save me."

Then raising his voice he hailed loudly:

"Ahoy! I am here, Brentford—here, two points off your starboard bow."

But no answer came from the boat, which still held on its course.

"Ahoy! ahoy the sloop!" he yelled in wild tones, and yet no answer was returned.

"God in Heaven! has he returned to trifle with me? Has he come back to sail around me while I sink down to my death?"

Still on its course held the sloop.

"Ho! Ho, the sloop! do not leave me here to die," rung out in thrilling tones.

Instantly the little craft swept up into the wind and lay quiet, while a boyish voice cried:

"Who hails, and where-away?"

"Ay, ay! Here in the water—a cable's length off your starboard quarter."

"All right, I will bear down for you," answered the same boyish voice, and the little sloop was again under way and headed for the drowning man.

"Where-away? Sing out, or I may run you down!" called out the young boatman.

"Here! steady as you are now, and for God's sake hasten; I am most gone," came in piteous tones.

As the boat drew near the poor wretch the youth put his helm down, and then leaning far over the gunwale, seized the outstretched hands of the man.

"Here! Now pull yourself aboard," he cried.

But no answer came: the moment his hand had grasped that of a fellow-being, the drowning man had become unconscious—the strain upon his nerves and strength had been terrible.

Realizing that he had fainted, his preserver dragged him into the boat, and luffing up into the wind set to work to restore him to consciousness.

But all his efforts were vain: the man still remained insensible, breathing heavily, and the boat was again put on her course straight for the land.

Thus an hour passed, and at length the little sloop ran into a small cove, under the shadow of a hill-side, and was skillfully laid alongside a small pier, which jutted out some thirty feet into the water.

Making his boat fast, the youth sprang upon the pier, and ran rapidly up the hillside to a handsome little cottage that faced the open sea, and looked down upon the little cove or harbor.

A loud knock at the door quickly brought an answer, in the shape of a large man, in slippers, overalls and pea-jacket.

"What! is it you, Enoch?"

"Yes, father; I got my load early, and determined to run back to-night, and not await for daylight; but, quick, sir, and aid me to the house with a poor fellow I picked up at sea; I fear he is dying."

"If you have saved his life it is lucky you did return to-night, Enoch. Here, wife, get a bed and hot drinks for a poor fellow that Enoch has brought with him; we are now going down to the boat to bring him up," and Captain Martin Blanchard followed his son rapidly down to the boat.

The man still lay as the youth had left him, breathing heavily, and wholly unconscious.

"Poor fellow; he must indeed have had a hard time. I will carry him, Enoch; he is too heavy for you," and so saying, Captain Blanchard raised the form in his strong arms and slowly trudged up the hill with him, the youth remaining behind to lower his sails, and leave all ship-shape on board his little boat, for it looked as though a storm was rising.

When Captain Blanchard arrived at the cottage, he found his wife had not been idle, for a bright fire was blazing on the hearth, and a cot was spread in front of it, while the table stood near with a glass and bottle, the latter marked "Cognac."

At the doorway two persons met him with anxious faces, and in wrappers hurriedly thrown on—one a lady of thirty-six or seven, and with a face yet showing traces of great beauty in her earlier years; the other was a maiden of seventeen, and strangely like her mother, only her form was less rounded and full.

"He is not dead, I hope, Martin," said the matron, anxiously, as she beheld the limp form in her husband's arms.

"No, wife, but he is in a bad way, I fear; we will soon see what we can do for him," and he laid the form down upon the cot, and the lamp-light streamed full in his face.

It was the face of a man of forty-three or four—a face bronzed by long exposure to the winds and waves, and with strongly-marked features, but withal a handsome face, though the eyes were now sunken and closed, and upon the mouth rested a look of suffering.

Captain Blanchard, his wife and daughter, all glanced into the dark face, and Mrs. Blanchard started back, with a cry of surprise.

"What is it, Bessie?"

"Martin, have you forgotten so soon? It is Oliver Eustace!"

"As I'm a sinner you are right, Bessie. His life saved by your son and mine! Well, we will do all we can for him, poor fellow, for his lot in life has not had the joy in it that mine has, wife. Lulu, send old Aunt Dinah here to help us," and Captain Blanchard turned to his daughter, who immediately left the room on her errand.

A few moments after she returned, accompanied by an old negress; and, saying that she would go and help her brother, Lulu left the cottage.

A quarter of an hour after, the brother and sister entered the cottage to find that the stranger had been restored to consciousness, and having been dressed in dry clothing and given a warm drink, had dropped off into a restless sleep.

"Now tell us about it, Enoch," said his father, as the youth threw himself upon a sofa.

He was about fifteen years of age, though he appeared older, for his face and form were well matured, and his whole bearing was that of a handsome, fearless, and determined boy.

Having thrown aside a heavy pea-jacket he wore, he was attired in a sailor suit of blue shirt and white duck pants, and removing the tarpaulin from his head, a mass of brown curls were revealed.

"Well, father, there is little I have to tell," began the youth. "I got my stores abroad before sunset, and determined to come home to-night, as I feared bad weather to-morrow."

"It was risky, my son, and you all alone."

"No, sir; I knew my bearings well, and had no trouble. When two leagues from shore, I was running along smoothly under a five-knot breeze, when I thought I heard a voice hailing me, and, narrowly searching the waters, I endeavored to discover from whence it came; but I could see no sail, and not even a boat, and held on, believing I was mistaken, until suddenly there could be no mistake; the voice hailed me from the water, and I found the poor fellow yonder almost drowning—in fact, he fainted ere I got him into the boat. Now you know as much as I do about him, sir."

"And more too, Enoch, for the man whom you saved is one you have often heard your mother and myself speak of—Oliver Eustace."

"What! Mother's old beau?" said the youth, mischievously.

"Yes; he was a great admirer of your mother eighteen or nineteen years ago. He was the son of a wealthy shipowner, I a mate on one of his father's vessels; but your mother preferred me to him, for he was a wild young fellow, and I won her, while Oliver Eustace went from bad to worse, drank deeply, and, at last, left his home, his father disowning him; and when he died, a year ago, he left his wealth to a nephew, cutting his son off with a shilling."

"For years we have not heard of Oliver, and to-night he comes to us from the sea, saved by our son. There are strange things happen in life, Enoch; but you and Lulu seek rest, for your mother and myself will watch with the patient," and Captain Blanchard stepped forward, and gazed earnestly into the dark, stern face of his old-time rival, while memories of the past thronged quickly before him, for, since the night of his marriage, Oliver Eustace and himself had never spoken one word to each other; the rich man's son had never forgiven the poor mate for winning from him the woman he loved more than all else in the world.

CHAPTER III.

BURYING THE HATCHET.

For days did the man called Oliver Eustace remain in a stupor—his lips sealed, his blood burning, and death threatening him.

But at length one day he opened his dark eyes in full consciousness, and they rested upon Lulu Blanchard, who, with a piece of embroidery in her hands, was seated near as nurse, her mother being worn out with watching the patient, and her father and brother having sailed up to town in the little sloop.

At first Oliver Eustace believed he was dead, and that his eyes rested upon an angel; but an instant's reflection convinced him that if dead, after the life he had led, angels would not be likely to be in his vicinity, and he gazed more earnestly, and saw that it was a maiden of rare beauty, with dark blue eyes, golden hair and ruby lips, from which broke ever and anon snatches of some pretty ballad, sung in a voice that was rich and musical.

Oliver Eustace waited until the song ended, and then said, softly:

"Where am I?"

Lulu Blanchard started; it was the first time the invalid had spoken the three weeks he had been in the cottage, and she had believed him unconscious.

Rising, she quickly advanced toward him, and said, kindly:

"You are with friends, I am glad you are better."

"Yes, I am better, but how came I here?"

"My brother picked you up at sea and brought you here."

"How long ago?"

"Three weeks to-night; but you must not talk, or you'll get worse again. I'll give you a soothing draught."

"Hold; you say I must not talk or I will get worse; have I not talked in my delirium?" eagerly asked the man.

"No, you have never spoken; now, don't spoil all by talking."

"Answer me one question and I will keep quiet; where am I?"

"With friends."

"Their name."

"Blanchard."

"Ha! Martin Blanchard?"

"Yes."

"He is no friend of mine, girl. He hates me, and your mother does, too."

"You are mistaken; for both my father and mother cared most kindly for you. They will be your friends, Mr. Eustace, if you will allow them to be."

"How know you my name?"

"My parents recognized you as an old friend."

The man was silent for a few moments, and then he said half aloud and in anger:

"And I owe my life to her son?"

"It was my brother Enoch that found you."

"One question more—who lives at my old home two leagues down the coast?"

"Since your father's death his heir has never been there: the place is in the hands of the servants only," answered Lulu, quietly.

"The heir! Well, I suppose he had a right to disown me, for I have been a little wild," he said aloud, and then muttered to himself:

"In the devil's name, who were those we fired upon, I wonder?"

After a still longer silence than before, he asked:

"Is there any news along the coast, miss? You see, I have been away for years."

"You will find many changes have taken place, I suppose, Mr. Eustace; but, indeed, you must keep quiet."

"Are the smugglers as bad here as in former years?"

Lulu believed his mind wandering, but answered:

"No; of late they have not been troublesome, until—"

"Until what, girl?" eagerly asked the man.

"The other night they landed and attacked your old home, robbing it of some gold and the silver plate your father left in his safe, and shooting down two of the servants."

"Were they killed?"

"No, they escaped to sea in their boat."

"I mean those that were shot down."

"One was killed at once, and the other died soon after, though he tried to tell who had shot him, but could not."

"Thank God! I will sleep now. I feel tired," and the invalid turned over upon his side and was soon in deep slumber.

When he awoke again it was evening, and the chair in which Lulu had been seated held another occupant—Mrs. Blanchard.

As she saw the invalid's eyes unclosed she walked toward him.

"I am glad to see that you are better."

"Bessie! Mrs. Blanchard, do you speak thus kindly to me?"

"Yes, I have ever felt kindly toward you, Oliver, though I regretted that you led the life you did."

"I lost you, Bessie, and I cared not what became of me. I was desperate then."

"You should have been a man and not yielded to such vices, simply because a woman discarded you; but that is past, so let it ever remain, and from now let your career be a different one, and in both my husband and myself you will find warm friends."

The man was silent for full five minutes; a little struggle seemed going on within him, and the woman watched him narrowly.

At length he said, slowly:

"Yes, my life has been wrecked; but I may yet get off shore again, and all may come well. Your son saved my life, Bessie?"

"And his father has nursed you as he would a brother; so let the dead past rest."

"I will. Where is your boy and your—husband?"

"I am here to answer for myself," said a deep, hearty voice, and Martin Blanchard entered the room, having heard the last question of the invalid.

"Eustace, old fellow, give me your hand. I am glad to see you on a level keel once more, and in a short while we will have you all ship-shape."

The invalid grasped the outstretched hand, while a shudder passed over his frame, but he said quickly:

"Captain Blanchard, I owe much to you. I am nothing but a poor vagabond, for my father left me penniless, and I can never prove my appreciation of all that you and yours have done for me."

"Nonsense, man. Twenty-five years ago, I sailed with your father as my captain. I was a cabin-boy then, and he aided me to climb up to the quarter-deck; and I now own a beautiful schooner—a prettier craft doesn't float—and I built her with the money I saved up while in your father's service."

"In two weeks I start on a trading cruise South and to the Indies, and I want a first-mate, and you just come in the nick of time to get the berth."

"Come, don't say no, for Bessie and myself have talked it all over, and the place is yours. But why in the name of Neptune were you cruising about alone in the sea that night when my boy, Enoch, found you?"

A slight flush stole over the pale face, but he answered promptly:

"I took passage in a coaster from New York to Portland, and I was leaning over the taffrail, lost my balance, and fell into the sea. I called loudly for help, but the sleepy skipper at the helm did not hear me, and I was left to drown. How long I was in the water I cannot tell; but I am a good swimmer, and struggled for life; but when I saw your son's boat and hailed him, I felt that it was my last effort. He saved my life."

"And it was lucky for you that he returned home that night."

"Yes."

"Well, you have nothing else to do, and can accept my offer?"

"It is very kind of you to make it. Yes, I accept it, for I learned in New York of my father's death, and that I was disinherited."

"He cut you off close, that's a fact; but the world is yet before you, and, as first-mate of a fine schooner, you ought to lay a snug sum by for old age."

"When do you sail, Captain Blanchard?"

"This day two weeks."

"I will go with you," and a strange look crossed the face of Oliver Eustace as he uttered the words—a look that would have put Martin Blanchard on his guard if he had read far back in the eyes the hate and bitterness resting there.

CHAPTER IV.

A SECRET EXPEDITION.

It had always been the desire of Captain Blanchard to see his own vessel anchored in the little cove, sheltered by the hill upon which stood his handsome cottage, and as soon as the last rope was in place and all on board ship-shape, with a crew of half-a-dozen men he hoisted anchor, and ran down toward his home, determined to give his wife and children an agreeable surprise.

As the fleet vessel headed down the coast, there appeared off its quarter a craft strangely like it in size and rig, though a third smaller.

There was the same long, lean hull, tall raking masts, long, needle-like bowsprits, sharp bows, and narrow stern.

Both vessels were under fore-mainsail and jib, and as they dashed swiftly along held their own without any variance.

"That craft sails as well as we do," and Captain Blanchard turned his glass upon the strange schooner, which was running along abreast of him, and about a mile distant.

"He is armed, too—carries four guns, to a broadside and bow and stern pivot chasers; it is a vessel of war and a beauty," continued the admiring seaman, keeping his gaze riveted upon the stranger.

The course upon which the two vessels were sailing was directly down the coast; but the merchant schooner was gradually pointing seaward, to avoid a sunken rock, and this would bring the two together at a given point, so that it became a matter of interest to see which would shoot across the line in advance of the other.

"Crowd on more sail; Judson set the topsails and foremast-staysail. We must shoot out ahead of that young bull-dog," said Captain Blanchard, delighted at a chance to try his speed with a schooner of war.

The extra canvas was at once set on the schooner, and, as if by magic, the strange craft followed suit, so that, as before the two vessels held their own, while each moment brought them nearer together.

"By Jove, we can't make it, and it will never do to crowd one of Uncle Sam's sea-dogs. I'll hold on until within a cable's length, and then run parallel with him," said Captain Blanchard.

Nearer and nearer the two vessels drew toward a given point, until they were within a cable's length, and yet each held on its course—a course that would bring them in collision if they kept it five minutes longer.

Yet neither showed any desire to yield the way, until, seeing that another moment would bring his bow upon the quarter of the stranger, Captain Blanchard, who had secretly hoped to make the other yield the way, gave the order to the helmsman to bring her up a few points.

Instantly the schooner of war shot on ahead, an officer in uniform on the quarter-deck raising his hat and calling out pleasantly:

"You have a swift vessel there, sir. A pleasant cruise to you."

Captain Blanchard saluted politely, dipped his flag, and turning to Mr. Judson, his second-mate, said:

"That is a nice fellow, I'll warrant—none of your navy snobs, but a gentleman and an officer. Head her in, Judson; yonder lies the cove we are making for."

To the surprise of Captain Blanchard the stranger also headed in shore, and when the schooner ran into the little basin near the cottage, its rival in speed sped swiftly by and disappeared around a curve in the coast a league below.

When the schooner of war rounded the rocky point that jutted out from the coast, the officer who had addressed Captain Blanchard, ordered the helmsman to head directly in shore.

"I have not been here since I was a boy, sir; but I think I remember the channel," he said to an elderly officer standing near, and who had just come on deck.

"I leave all to you, Meredith; this is your expedition, you know," returned the officer addressed, and who was the schooner's commander.

"Thank you, Captain De Lancy, and I will try and have all come out well," replied Wayne Meredith, who was a dashing young lieutenant, scarcely over twenty-two years of age.

"There, sir, you see the residence of my uncle Eustace," and Lieutenant Meredith pointed to a grand-looking mansion, now visible amid a grove of stately trees, and with grounds sloping down to the edge of the little harbor in its front.

"Your residence, you mean, Meredith," said the commander, smiling.

"True, sir, I have not yet begun to realize my good fortune. Now you see the place well through that avenue in the park."

"It is a lordly home, Meredith, and I congratulate you. I suppose, now, you will leave the service and become a landsman."

"Not I, sir. Steady, as you are, helmsman! Now, port a little. There, we are in the basin, and I will come to anchor."

"If we go ashore, Captain De Lancy, I think it will lull any suspicion as to our coming here."

"As you please," answered the captain, and ten minutes after the schooner lay quietly at anchor, and a cutter was rowing shoreward with several officers and half a dozen oarsmen.

Leading the way to the mansion, Wayne Meredith looked up the old servant then in charge, and who, since the murder and robbery several weeks before, had been living in constant dread of his own life, and with his wife had fortified himself in the kitchen in a manner to withstand a siege.

Recognizing the young heir, whom he had known as a boy, the butler welcomed him warmly, and, aided by his wife, at once set about preparations to make the visitors comfortable.

After a hearty dinner, washed down with old wines from the cellars, Wayne Meredith said:

"Captain De Lancy, I will now leave you here to enjoy yourself as best you can, while Lieutenant Bartlett had better return on board the schooner and hold himself in readiness with two boats' crews, for it will be dark in half an hour, and an hour after Mr. Bartlett should move."

"Yes, and you will have a guide for me and my land force?" asked Captain De Lancy.

"Yes, sir; I will come myself, if possible; but if not, I will send the one of whom I spoke, and he can tell you where to make the attack."

"You are running a great risk, Meredith, if your informant has deceived you."

"I believe him true, sir; but if you hear nothing of me by daylight, then you had better advance with your force, and the map I gave you will lead you to the spot. Now I must leave you," and the young officer entered the mansion, leaving his commander smoking upon the balcony.

Half an hour after, and just as darkness settled upon the land and sea, a man, in the coarse garb of a common seaman, issued from a side-door of the mansion, and hastily glided into the shadows of the park on the sea-side of the house.

At a rapid pace, and as though familiar with the surroundings, he sped along until he came out into a highway; but crossing this, he walked on over meadow and hill, until the roar of the ocean was distinctly heard ahead of him.

Ascending a steep and rocky hill he found himself upon a bold promontory or cliff that overhung the sea, more than a hundred feet below.

Upon the summit of the cliff a single old tree, tattered and torn by many storms, was standing, and, reaching up to a broken limb, the seaman found what appeared to be a string.

This he pulled thrice and then let go, and awaited in silent expectation.

"Who comes?" suddenly came from a rocky covert, in a deep voice.

"Friend!" answered the seaman.

"What friend?" asked the deep voice.

"One who has a strong arm and ready knife."

"Come forward."

The seaman advanced, and, at the edge of the cliff, found a steep path leading, as it were, down into the huge rock.

Just here stood two rough-looking men, as seen by the bright starlight, and they gazed earnestly at the new-comer.

"We do not know your face," said one, suspiciously.

"No; but you know the face of him that sent me. I come from Dirk Douglass."

"You are welcome; come to the cavern."

Leading the way down the steep path, after a walk of several minutes, the men, who were in ad-

vance, halted upon the narrow edge or shelf on the very face of the cliff; but a shrill whistle caused, what seemed to be, the wall of rock to open, but which was, in reality, a canvas covering that concealed the mouth of a large cavern.

Within this were two score of men, laughing, drinking, and playing cards, while around them were boxes and bales of goods, baskets of wines, barrels of liquor, and many piles of clothing, cloths, and silks thrown promiscuously together in a corner.

All eyed the stranger as he entered, and one of his conductors said:

"A friend of Dirk Douglass."

"Well, my man, what news sends Dirk?" asked a tall man, with heavy beard and eagle eyes, turning his gaze upon the stranger, who appeared to be a young seaman, good-looking, and with a resolute face.

"He says the schooner came down to-day, and to-night is your only chance to take her. There are not half-a-dozen men on board."

"So we saw from the cliff. And said he nothing of another vessel?" asked the man who appeared to be the chief.

"Yes; a schooner-of-war came down the coast, too. It is now anchored in the basin opposite the old Eustace mansion. It brought down the heir to the estate."

"How know you this, my man?"

"I am one of the schooner's crew. I just came from the mansion."

"Ha! Dirk should be careful when he gets one of Uncle Sam's sea-dogs to aid us."

"He was careful; he knows me well, and he urges that you seize the schooner to-night, and put at once to sea. In a few days you can return for the balance of your men and plunder."

"You are right; I will take Dirk's advice, for this place can not remain concealed much longer, and we must go to our new retreat on the Maine coast. Boys, all but a dozen of you go with me to-night; the rest will stay and pack up our plunder, for I will return in a few nights for you. Now get ready, lad, after we have a glass all round in honor of our new friend here, who, by the way, has not given us his name."

"My name is Wayne," quietly responded the young seaman, and in spite of his humble attire, and having shaved off his mustache, the reader cannot fail to recognize in him the handsome young lieutenant of the schooner of war, and the heir to the Eustace estate.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT BY NIGHT.

So delighted was Enoch Blanchard with the new schooner, that he volunteered to hold the deck while the crew went on shore to enjoy a supper which his mother, with the aid of Lulu and old Dinah had prepared for them.

Full of the importance of his situation, he paced the deck, after the departure of Mate Judson and his men, and all kinds of ambitious dreams floated through his brain, and he longed to be the commander of just such a beautiful vessel, and skim the seas in search of the cruel buccaneers that infested the southern waters.

So busy in fact was Enoch with his "air castles," that he failed to observe two boats pulling with muffled oars upon the schooner; nor did he know of their presence until a number of dark forms scaled the bulwarks and confronted the astonished youth, who, lost in reveries of pirates, at first believed he saw before him a score of those desperate men.

But Enoch was utterly fearless, and alone though he was, he gave one loud cry for help, and knocked down the first man that laid hand upon him.

But he was unarmed, and throwing themselves upon him, the strangers at once bound and gagged him, while his cry for aid remained unanswered.

As soon as the youth was secured, one of the boarders, who seemed to be the leader, walked to the side of the schooner and said in a low tone:

"We have the craft; pull in shore and conceal your boats."

"Ay, ay, sir," came the answer, and the two boats that had brought the boarders, and now with but one man in each, moved slowly and noiselessly shoreward, until they disappeared in the shadow of the hill.

Hardly had they been lost to sight when two more large boats were visible coming swiftly yet noiselessly into the little cove.

They also pulled with muffled oars and were crowded with men.

Heading for the schooner they boarded upon either side, and the one who appeared the leader, cried cheerfully:

"Deserted, as I'm a sinner. Ah, the lights ashore prove where the crew have gone—making merry over some of old Blanchard's wine."

Then turning to his men, he continued in subdued tones:

"Up with that anchor, lads, and in a hurry. Now for the sails. There, she catches the breeze," and lying well over to the six-knot breeze, the beautiful vessel stood out of the harbor, just as Captain Blanchard and his crew came out of the cottage.

One glance into the cove, and he saw that the schooner was gone. One glance seaward, and a mile away he beheld her flying over the waters.

"In heaven's name what does this mean?" he cried, aghast at what he beheld.

None could answer him, and with one accord they all ran down to the pier, upon which stood two men, and in alarm for Enoch, Mrs. Blanchard, Lulu and old Dinah followed.

"Well, sirs, what can you tell me about the flight

of yonder vessel," cried Captain Blanchard, angrily confronting the two men.

"Are you Captain Blanchard, sir?" asked one of the men, saluting politely.

"I am, sir, and yonder schooner is mine from keel to truck."

"No harm will befall her, sir, my commander bid me tell you. More I cannot say; but, within a short while you will see her put back into the cove. Hark! do you not hear firing on board?"

As the seaman spoke, there came distinctly to the ears of the listeners on shore the rapid discharge of fire-arms, the clash of steel against steel, and the wild shouts of combatants, while the flashes of the pistols illumined the deck and showed a fierce combat waging.

"My son, my poor boy! He is there amid all that danger. What can it mean?" cried Mrs. Blanchard, in great distress, and as she spoke the schooner yawed widely in her course, and then swept up into the wind and lay to; but the combat on board grew fiercer and fiercer, and all looked on in amazement and dread, for it seemed as though the new vessel had fallen into the hands of a crew of devils.

Again Captain Blanchard turned upon the two men at his side.

"Men, I am not one you can trifle with. I demand an answer to my question—what means the flight of yonder schooner and the combat on board? I left my son on the deck of that vessel."

"See, sir, the schooner is putting back for the cove; it will soon come to anchor, and then you can learn all. The fighting has ceased, sir," and the seaman pointed to the schooner, which was now running landward wing-and-wing.

Captain Blanchard made no reply, but all watched the coming vessel, saw her glide gracefully through the channel leading to the cove, and the next instant drop anchor, while a boat put off from the side and headed shoreward.

"Hurrah for our side!" came in ringing boyish tones from the stern-sheets of the approaching boat, and the next instant Enoch Blanchard and an officer in uniform sprung upon the pier.

"Father, allow me to present Lieutenant Wayne Meredith, of whom you have heard. My mother and sister, Lieutenant Meredith."

Still amazed, Captain Blanchard accepted the outstretched hand of the young officer, while his wife and daughter bowed.

"You must pardon a liberty I have taken with your vessel, Captain Blanchard, but I borrowed it for a good purpose, which I will tell you."

"Learning from an old seaman who sailed with me when I was a midshipman, and whose life I twice saved, of a haunt of smugglers on this coast, and of which he was a member, I offered him pardon if he would aid me in their capture, and he did so, by telling me that your vessel was to be seized by them and turned into a coast-pirate, and that he was in town to give them notice when you put to sea, for it was known that you intended anchoring off your own home."

"With this information I arranged my plans, and knowing something of this locality, having visited my uncle Eustace years ago, I sought the smugglers' cavern, disguised as a spy, and led them upon the schooner, which they supposed deserted; but I had already ordered an officer or my own vessel and two boats' crews to take possession of your vessel and conceal themselves on board, which they did, making prisoner of your gallant son here."

"Shortly after I boarded with the smugglers, the craft was put under sail and headed seaward, and then I gave the signal for attack, and out of the hold came my men, and, after a desperate fight, we captured the surprised outlaws and now have them in irons; and through all your son behaved with the courage of a veteran, for Lieutenant Bartlett released him as soon as he found out who he was, and he joined in the attack upon the smugglers."

Captain Blanchard was delighted at the turn affairs had taken, and invited the lieutenant and his men to the house; but Wayne Meredith told him their work was not yet complete—the cavern was yet to be stormed, and asked if Enoch might accompany him.

The father readily gave his consent, but the mother hesitated until Enoch begged earnestly to go, and she yielded.

"While your men are getting ready and putting the wounded and prisoners in the boats, you can come up to the house and have a glass of wine with me," said the captain.

Wayne Meredith readily consented, and giving an order to Lieutenant Bartlett regarding the dead, wounded, and prisoners, he offered his arm to Mrs. Blanchard and walked toward the cottage, followed by Captain Blanchard, Lulu, and Enoch.

As they came into the full light of the lamp, the eyes of Wayne Meredith and Lulu Blanchard met. They had both been curious to see the other's face, and that one glance told each volumes of the thoughts of the other.

"A pleasant and successful cruise in your schooner, captain," and the young officer dashed off his glass of wine.

Then, after another glass to the health of the ladies, Wayne Meredith and Enoch departed, the latter almost tempted not to go as he saw tears in his mother's eyes.

Arriving at the pier Lieutenant Meredith found his own boats filled with his crew, and the two boats of the smugglers containing the wounded, dead, and prisoners.

Springing into the stern sheets of his cutter, followed by Enoch, he gave the order to give way and the four boats moved out of the cove as silently as they had entered it.

Skirting the coast for a few miles, they came to

the cliff in which was the smugglers' cavern, and landing noiselessly, the sailors scaled the steep rock, and led by their dashing young officer, dragged down the canvas curtain and rushed into the cave.

Though surprised the smugglers did not tamely submit, and a fierce encounter followed; but only for a few minutes did it last as the sailors outnumbered them two to one, and they soon cried for mercy.

"Mr. Bartlett, you remain here with the men, and I will return and acquaint Captain De Lancy with our success; then we will bring the schooner as near as possible and come to anchor, and remove this booty in the boats."

"You can lay the schooner alongside the cliff, sir; there is plenty of depth, and I know the channel in here well," said Enoch.

"Then you shall pilot the schooner in. Come with me."

Entering the smallest boat the lieutenant and Enoch were rowed rapidly away from the cavern, the youth taking the tiller-ropes and steering through the rocky islands that dotted the coast.

Just at daybreak the boat landed at the pier in front of the Eustace mansion, and found Captain De Lancy and his land force starting in search of Lieutenant Meredith, about whom the commander was most anxious.

With glad surprise he learned of the success of the expedition, and remarked pleasantly:

"You sly young officers have gained all the honor, while I slumbered sweetly in an easy-chair in your library, Meredith. Well, I'll not quarrel with you, for I'm getting too old to be climbing over rocks and boarding vessels. Now let us go on board the schooner and see what our capture amounts to."

Under the pilotage of Enoch Blanchard, who proved himself a thorough sailor, the schooner of war headed up the coast and in half an hour ran gently alongside the cliff, where her arrival was greeted with a cheer by the part of her crew already there.

Having transferred the booty and prisoners to the schooner, the fleet vessel headed up the coast, Enoch still at the helm; but when off his cottage home, the youth bade farewell to his new-found friends, and went over the side into his own staunch little sloop, for, seeing the approach of the vessel, Captain Blanchard had sent Mr. Judson out to meet his son, who returned quite a hero after the adventures of the night.

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF LIFE'S VOYAGE.

No matter what the early life of Oliver Eustace had been, it could certainly be said of him that he was a perfect seaman, and the schooner had not been twenty-four hours at sea on her southern cruise ere Captain Blanchard congratulated himself upon having a first-mate in whom he had perfect confidence.

Having fully recovered from his illness, Oliver Eustace had set to work with a will, and when he bade farewell to those at the cottage who had proven his best friends, he left behind a warm feeling in their hearts for the unfortunate man.

One night—a week after raising anchor and sailing from the little cove—Captain Blanchard was taken suddenly ill, and was confined to his cabin; but he felt that all would go well in the hands of his mate, and had no anxiety for his vessel.

When not on duty Oliver Eustace was always with his commander, reading or talking to him, and through his illness of several weeks proved a most devoted and untiring nurse.

At length Captain Blanchard was on his feet once more, but a wreck of his former self, for his face was white and haggard, and his body bent.

"When we reach southern latitudes you will come round all right, never fear," said the mate, cheerfully, to his commander; but the words proved not to be true, for after a few days Captain Blanchard was again down seriously ill, and was compelled to relinquish the entire control of the vessel to his mate.

Calling his officer into the cabin one night, Captain Blanchard said:

"Eustace, if I thought that I would live to reach home, I would put about and run back with all speed; but I will not live a week."

"Nonsense, captain, you are blue."

"Yes, I am blue, and with cause; I know that I am dying, and the medicines I take do me no good. In a week's time, my friend, you will bury me in blue water."

"I hope not, sir; perhaps to-morrow you will feel differently."

"No, I had a dread at my heart when I left home that I would never see my wife and children again, and I know that my presentiment will come true."

Oliver Eustace said no more then, and Captain Blanchard sunk into an uneasy slumber.

But each day proved that the sick man had diagnosed his case correctly; with each sunrise he was weaker, with each sunset he expected to die.

Again, one night, when in the Gulf, he sent for Oliver Eustace.

"Oliver, my friend, I feel that I cannot last long; my cable of life is parting, and I have a few words to say to you ere I die."

"I am listening, sir," said the mate, deeply moved.

"Well, this cruise is turning out well, pecuniarily, and will bring my family a good round sum, and after I am dead I wish you to continue the voyage—run down the South American coast and round the Horn and touch at Peru, as was my intention, and out of the profits of the voyage take one-tenth as your share, besides a captain's pay."

"Do not think of me, Captain Blanchard."

"But I will think of you. I leave you to stand in my shoes, and in command of my vessel, and to you

I look that my family shall be cared for and receive their share."

"I will do all in my power, sir, to carry out your every wish," said the mate, firmly.

"I know it, Oliver, and if there is one thing that I can do for you ere I die I will do it."

The mate's eyes flashed fire for an instant, and he said, earnestly:

"There is one thing you can do for me, Captain Blanchard."

"Name it, Oliver."

"Years ago, we were rivals for the hand of your sweet wife; I lost and you won; but in your daughter, I have found one I love with my whole heart. All the love I felt for her mother I give to her, and, though double her age, I would make her my wife."

"Nothing would please me more, Oliver, than to see Lulu your wife, for I know now that you are a changed man, and under her influence you would never return to your wicked life. Yes, win her heart, and I give my consent on my dying bed to have you marry her."

"But, sir, will she believe it was your will unless she has your word for it? Can you not write a few lines? and, armed with this, I feel that she will be mine."

"She is very young yet, Oliver, and if you will promise to wait until she is eighteen I will willingly do as you ask."

"Assuredly I will, sir; it will be nearly a year before the schooner again anchors in the cove, and—"

"Ah! what a sorrow will light on that little home when they know that I stand not on the deck; when they know that I am far down beneath the dark waters of the Gulf," and Captain Blanchard buried his face in his hands. "Eustace, I am not afraid to die. I have faced death often, and I dread not the hereafter; but it is hard to say farewell forever to my poor wife, my poor children. Little did they know when I said good-by that they would never see me more."

"And, my friend, look after my brave boy, and when he is older make him an officer on the schooner, for he is well capable of it; and if there is a war with England—and I feel that it must come—let this vessel be armed, and become a privateer to cruise against the foes of the United States, and on an armed deck, I know that Enoch will win a name for himself; but you wished me to write a line to Lulu for you."

The mate eagerly placed before the dying man pen, ink, and paper, and propping him up so that he could write, awaited in silence.

Grasping the pen with a firmness that the dying will often show, Captain Blanchard wrote as follows:

"AT SEA, Dec. 10th, 1810."

"On board Schooner Light Wing."

"MY BELOVED DAUGHTER LULU—Long ere your eyes fall upon these lines, he whom you call father will have slipped his cable for that other world where storms never come, and therefore my words should have double-weight with you as coming from one over whom hovers the shadow of death."

"Knowing that no lover has ever won your young heart, and believing that I act for your good, I here urge that you, after you arrive at the age of eighteen, become the wife of one whom I believe to be my truest friend—Oliver Eustace."

"Through the long weeks of my illness he has cared for me as though he were my own brother, and in his care do I leave my vessel. His lips will tell you of my death, and how I died, fearless, and in the hope that you will all be happy, even though I sleep at the bottom of the sea."

"Oliver loves you, Lulu, with his whole heart, and I know that he will make you a noble husband; hence, grant the dying entreaty of your father, and become his wife."

"For the last time in this life your old father bids you farewell."

"MARTIN BLANCHARD."

The letter was then addressed, and two more written—one to his wife and one to Enoch.

"Now call in Mr. Judson and one of the men, Oliver, that they may witness the papers turning over the schooner and cargo to you."

The mate hastily obeyed and the papers were drawn up, signed and witnessed, after which the dying captain fell back exhausted.

From that moment Captain Blanchard failed more rapidly, and the following evening at sunset he was carried on deck, at his own request, to die.

Wistfully his eyes wandered over the placid sea, and then upon his beautiful vessel; then they fell upon the setting sun, and though his sufferings were great, he showed no sign of anguish, but with his gaze fixed upon the rosy West, and his hand clasping that of Oliver Eustace, he sunk into the sleep of death—his voyage of life had ended.

CHAPTER VII.

LULU'S ADVENTURE.

ONE afternoon, half a year after the daring capture of the smugglers by Lieutenant Wayne Meredith, Lulu mounted a pony that her mother had bought for Enoch, and cantered away on a ride by herself.

Several times before she had taken the same road, for it was a favorite ride of hers, and she was wont to go out upon Smugglers' Cliff, as the cavern rock was now called, and gaze up and down the coast and far out upon the sea.

Perhaps she also liked the landward view from the cliff, for it looked down upon the distant mansion, the inheritance of Wayne Meredith, with its beautiful grounds and pleasant fields surrounding.

"Stand there, Button, while I work," said the beautiful girl, as she sprung from her saddle and fastened from the horse a portfolio of paper and pencils.

"This will make a pretty sketch, and if he comes, as he promised he would, to see us, I will surprise him with it, for I'll frame it in autumn leaves."

So putting, the young girl sought the best position she could find for the purpose, and seated herself upon a rock to sketch the pretty scene.

"I wonder where he is now? At sea somewhere, I suppose; and I wonder if he has ever thought of me?"

"Silly girl I am to be dreaming of the handsome and rich young officer, whom I never saw but once. Hey ho, but I cannot help it," and Lulu Blanchard, went on with her drawing, not knowing that two pairs of eyes were fastened upon her, and two tongues were muttering threats against her.

Crouching down in a crevice of the rocks, whither Lulu's coming had caused them to take refuge hastily, were two men dressed in sailors' garb.

They were rough-looking men, with bronzed, bearded faces, and had evidently come to the cliff by means of a skiff, tied to a large rock at the water's edge.

Both were armed with knife and pistol in their belts, and near them lay shovels, pick and an ax, not yet stained with earth.

"I tell you, Tom, we were fools not to go to work when we first came here," growled one.

"And been seen by some one and lost all. No, I tell you, we did well to wait; in two hours it will be dark, and in as much more time we can dig up the box and then clear out."

"But the gal; she may take it into her head to look about her, and then we'll be discovered."

"No; when she gets to work with her drawing—for that's what she's after—I will nab her."

"What the devil will you do that for?"

"For revenge. That is old Blanchard's daughter, and I've always believed her brother was the cause of our being captured that night."

"But, what will you do with the gal?"

"I'll take her to a place I know up the coast, and let her folks know she can be had for a good sum in gold. If they don't want to buy her, why I'll kill her; cursed if I don't!"

"You seem to be mighty angry with the little woman, shipmate."

"I am," savagely said the other; "and I'll tell you why. I sailed with her father, ten years ago, and he had me lashed up and whipped."

"What had you done?"

"I got drunk and cursed the second mate, and he had me lashed; but I swore to be even with him, and I've a good mind to give up the gold and kill the gal," and the speaker looked savagely ferocious in his hatred for one who had never injured him.

An hour passed away, and so deeply was Lulu engrossed in her work, that she failed to observe two forms silently creeping upon her.

Nearer and nearer they came, crawling as noiselessly as snakes, and as vicious, over the rocks until within a few feet of her.

"There, I have finished my sketch," and the maiden started to rise to her feet; but she was seized in strong arms and a rough hand placed over her mouth.

Quickly she was borne by one of the ruffians down the steep pathway into the cavern, and there securely bound and gagged with her own scarf.

"Now for the pony; I'll go and turn him loose," said one of the men.

"No; are you a fool? I'll fix him so that they'll believe he has tumbled from the cliff with his rider," answered the man who had sworn revenge against Captain Blanchard and his name.

Going up the cliff path again, the two men seized the poor pony, and turning his back toward the sea, they forced the frightened animal backward until, with a startled shriek, he was hurled into the waters below.

Heavily he fell, and sunk from the sight of the cruel men who had doomed him to die.

"He'll be washed up on the beach, and they'll believe the gal drowned with him. Now, let us go to work;" and the speaker took up the pick and shovel, and began digging at the root of the solitary tree that grew upon the summit of the cliff.

For a while, they glanced around them searchingly; but as it grew nearer dark they forgot their caution and worked hard, throwing out the earth and stones and making a deep hole, yet still digging on.

"Are you certain, shipmate, that the box was never removed?"

"I am sure."

"Well, are you sure that this is the spot where you and the captain buried it?"

"What should I dig here for if I was not sure? Do you think I am digging this hole for fun?" angrily said the other.

"You are digging it for your grave!"

The pick and shovel fell from the hands of the workmen, and, with white faces, they turned, to behold a tall form standing within a few feet of them.

"Well, my jail-birds, what devilry are you up to now?" said the new-comer, quietly, while he stood gazing upon them, his right hand upon a pistol-butt that was visible in the breast of his coat.

One glance at the man before them, and they recognized one they believed to be far away; one who had captured their band six months before, hung their leader, and sent them to prison, from which they had managed to escape in some way.

But must they submit tamely now?

Were they not two to one, and were they not armed as well as the man before them?

Besides, at their feet was a hidden treasure—a few thousands in gold, buried a year before, and they would not yield their gold and liberty without a struggle.

As though the same thought pervaded both, and a

common impulse governed them, they sprung forward, their hands upon their knives.

Quickly the hand was drawn from the breast-pocket, a pistol was leveled, and there followed a sharp report—a groan—a fall.

But the other ruffian hesitated not at the fall of his comrade, and, with uplifted knife, sprung upon his enemy, and the keen blade descended.

Quickly and with skill the knife was parried with the barrel of the pistol, and a blow from the shoulder straight was leveled at the face of the assailant.

It struck fair, and down went the smuggler to the ground; but he was quickly on his feet, his pistol in hand, and once again he attempted the life of his enemy, firing full upon him.

With a cry, whether of rage or pain it was then hard to tell, he rushed upon the smuggler, and closed with him in a deadly struggle.

Both were powerful men, and, for a while, the contest seemed to be equal; but, suddenly, the smuggler was hurled to the earth with a force that momentarily stunned him, and when he returned to consciousness he found himself securely bound, while his comrade lay dead not far away. Looking around for his captor, he beheld him going down the cliff-path at a rapid pace.

A few seconds more and he stood in the entrance to the cavern, and saw a few feet from him the bound form of Lulu Blanchard.

In an instant he had removed the scarf from her mouth and cut the bonds from her wrists and ankles.

"Lieutenant Meredith!" broke from her lips.

"At your service, Miss Blanchard. I saw with a sea-glass from my balcony, those devils seize you upon the cliff and came to your aid."

"It was so noble of you, and I owe you more than life; but I knew not that you were at the mansion," said the delighted maiden.

"Yes, I arrived last night, having run down to spend a month's leave; but you are unnerved, so come with me to the mansion and I will drive you home, for it is getting dark."

"And those horrible men?" and Lulu shuddered.

"One of them I was forced to kill—the other I made prisoner. They were two of the smugglers I captured here six months ago."

Leading Lulu from the cavern the two ascended the cliff and passed near the dead and bound smugglers.

Stopping over the prisoner, Wayne Meredith made his bindings more secure, and then walked rapidly along with the maiden in the direction of his elegant home, Lulu showing great distress when told by the young officer the fate of poor Britton the pony.

It was not a very long walk, but darkness settled upon the earth ere the mansion was reached, and Lulu felt nervous, for her fright had given her a great shock, and she knew her mother would be most anxious regarding her.

But Wayne Meredith ordered the horses put at once to the carriage, and sending servants to the cliff after the dead and living smugglers, he drove Lulu rapidly home and delivered her safely into the arms of her mother, who had indeed become most anxious regarding her.

Lieutenant Meredith declined the invitation to spend the evening, and returned home; but the following morning Lulu received a large bouquet of choice flowers from the mansion conservatory, and a short note inquiring after her health, and telling her that the dead smuggler had been buried and the living one returned to prison.

"As for the treasure for which the wretches were digging, I found upon search that it had been removed long before, or had never been buried in that place. At any rate the cavity served as a grave for the unfortunate fellow whom I was forced to kill."

Thus ended Wayne Meredith's note, and to it Lulu returned quite a lengthy reply, which closed with an invitation to the young officer to dine at Sea View Cottage that day with her mother, brother and herself, an invitation the lieutenant accepted with marvelous alacrity, for the blue eyes of the maiden were already playing sad havoc with his peace of mind.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LIGHT-WING'S RETURN.

SLOWLY the months dragged away, until more than a year had gone by, and the inmates of Sea View Cottage were beginning to feel anxious regarding the schooner, for in those days, kind reader, the mails were very irregular; and though they did not expect letters from Captain Blanchard, except a chance opportunity offered for sending one, there was danger to be dreaded from buccaneers which then cruised in southern waters.

Even if the speed of the Light-Wing kept her clear of the pirates there was the ever-to-be-dreaded danger of storms, which sent many a stanch vessel and bold crew to the bottom.

Captain Blanchard had expected to be gone about a year, and now that other months were rolling by the fond wife dreaded harm might have befallen him, for the war of 1812 with Great Britain was now breaking out, and the sea was full of dangers.

At length, one pleasant afternoon, the Light-Wing was sighted standing rapidly landward, and heading for the cove.

At a glance Enoch had recognized her and hastily called his mother and sister, and with joyous faces the three stood upon the balcony, watching the approach of the beautiful vessel.

Seizing his telescope from the beackets, when the schooner drew nearer, Enoch turned it upon the deck and looked long and earnestly.

"I do not see father. Mr. Eustace is on deck, and so is Judson; but I cannot see father."

"He is doubtless in the cabin," said Mrs. Blanchard, while a dread came upon her heart.

"We shall soon see. They head for the channel. Come, let us go down to the pier."

"Do you see your father yet, Enoch?"

"No, mother; he is not on deck."

"Go down and meet the boat—quick! Something tells me harm has befallen your father," and Mrs. Blanchard sunk down into a rustic chair, while Lulu, with pale face, came to her side.

Like the wind Enoch sped down the hill and ran out upon the pier.

The schooner had just let fall her anchor, and the crew were furling the sails, while a boat put off from the side.

In that boat was Oliver Eustace and two oarsmen; Captain Blanchard was not there.

"Welcome back, Mr. Eustace; but where is my father," cried Enoch, in as calm a voice as he could command.

"Enoch, my poor boy," and springing upon the pier the schooner's commander grasped the youth's hand.

"Speak, sir; where is my father?" almost commanded Enoch.

"He was taken very ill a few weeks after sailing, and—"

"Is he dead?" and the dark eyes turned upon the mate.

"He is; he died in my arms, when we were crossing the Gulf of Mexico, and I buried him. I have much to tell you, poor boy, and a letter which your father wrote to you ere he died," and the mate spoke sadly.

"Come, let us go up to the cottage. My poor mother, she already dreads evil tidings," and mastering his own feelings, Enoch led the way to the house, where sat Mrs. Blanchard, white and grief-stricken, while Lulu knelt beside her weeping. They knew some great sorrow had befallen them when they saw Oliver Eustace land alone.

Mechanically the wife stretched out her hand to the mate, while from her cold lips came the question:

"What have you to tell me?"

In low words Oliver Eustace told the story of Captain Blanchard's long illness and death.

It was a terrible, bitter blow for the mother and her children, and the deepest gloom settled down upon the household; but they longed to hear the story over and over again, of how Martin Blanchard died, and it was long after midnight ere the mate arose to return to his vessel.

"You will remain with us to-night? your old room is ready," said Mrs. Blanchard, speaking for the first time for hours.

"No, I must run on up to the city and get rid of my cargo, which will bring a good price in market now, and, by the way, the voyage has turned out well, for I have a round sum for you; but we'll talk business at another time. Good-night, and, Enoch, do not let your mother grieve too deeply."

The mate left the cottage, and glancing from the door half an hour later, Enoch saw the Light-Wing gliding up the coast, looking like some huge white bird swooping over the sea.

But Oliver Eustace did not remain long away from the little cottage, for in ten days he was back again, and he had much news to tell.

He brought with him the personal effects of his late commander, and the letters written by the dying man to those he so dearly loved.

In handing Lulu's letter to her he said kindly:

"I give you this, Lulu, but I do not wish it to worry you in the least. Let your answer remain unsaid for awhile yet."

Then turning to Enoch, he continued:

"There is stirring news afloat, my boy, for the British and American cruisers have met in combat on the high seas, and the whole country is aroused. What say you to taking a hand?"

Enoch's face flushed with joy. To be a sailor on a man-of-war had been his great ambition, for he felt determined to work his way up.

"Above all things, I would like to serve my country," he said.

"Well, your good father, ere he died, knew that war was inevitable, and we talked much together over the future, and it was his wish that I should arm and man the schooner and make a privateer of her, making you one of my officers."

"Me!"

"Yes; he knew, as I do, that you were every way fitted for the position, and though but a boy in years—not quite seventeen, I believe—you are a man in experience on shipboard, for your father has taken you many a cruise with him."

"Oh, yes, sir; and when I was but twelve years of age he let me bring the brig into port without anyone else giving an order, and I did not make a mistake; and you know I have studied navigation for years," and Enoch was delighted at the prospect before him.

"Would you take my son from me, too?"

It was Mrs. Blanchard who spoke, and Oliver Eustace winced, but he said quickly:

"It was the wish of his father, for he felt the Enoch would distinguish himself if he had the opportunity."

"I suppose I am selfish; but my grief has made me so, Oliver, and it is but just that every one who can should serve his country."

"The profits of privateering are immense, and—"

"I have money enough; that will not tempt me; this home, the interest in the schooner, and what I have in bank will give us all a handsome support; but the vessel I must risk if she goes to sea as a privateer."

"Yes, there is some risk in it, but she is very fleet and well armed she can make a good fight."

"When would you sail?"

"In about four weeks; it would take about that time to equip and get her ship-shape, and Enoch could remain at home until she was ready for sea."

"Then he can go. Dinah has gotten married since you left, and I will get her husband as a hired man, and he will be a protection to us," and while Enoch, his mother and Oliver Eustace discussed the matter still further, Lulu arose and sought her own room.

Here she opened and read her own letter, and her face turned deadly pale.

"Marry him, when I love another? Oh, no, no, no!" and she buried her face in her hands.

"It would be sinful to become his wife when I am engaged to Wayne Meredith, whom I love with my whole soul, and I know that he loves me; he has told me so over and over again, and made me promise to become his wife one of these days."

"Now my father rises from the sea between us, and if I disobey his dying request I will be forever unhappy. What shall I do, what shall I do?"

Again the golden head was bowed in grief, and for a long time it remained thus. Then she raised it quickly, her face deadly pale, but a resolute look upon her pretty mouth.

"I will do it, come what may," she said, firmly, and washing away the tear-stains she entered the parlor.

Oliver Eustace was there alone—her mother had been called out to see Dinah about some household affairs, and Enoch was hitching the horse to the buggy to drive Captain Eustace back to town, for he was anxious to commence work on the schooner at once.

Walking up to the man, Lulu said, firmly:

"Captain Eustace, I have read my father's letter, and I have determined to obey his command—I will marry you."

"Is it so hateful to you, Lulu, to become my wife that you shudder when you give me the promise?" and his face paled.

"I admire and like you, sir, exceedingly, and your kindness to my poor father in his illness I can never forget or repay; but there is a vast difference in our ages—you were the lover of my mother, years ago, and—and—"

"Go on, Miss Blanchard."

"I am engaged to another."

"What?"

"I mean it—I love another; but, if you ask me to keep my father's wish and become your wife, I will do so."

"I do ask it, Lulu. You are all that I have in the world to love, and for you I have changed from the evil life I once led."

The man's voice trembled, and pitying him, and feeling that she was doing her duty to her dead father, Lulu said, firmly:

"Then I will become your wife. Let us speak no more about it for the present."

At this moment Enoch called to say the buggy was waiting, and, bidding a hasty adieu to Mrs. Blanchard and Lulu, Captain Eustace departed.

As he drove away with Enoch, Mrs. Blanchard said, sadly:

"Lulu, your father made a dying wish in his letter to me that concerned you deeply."

"I know it, mother; I have promised to become his wife."

"And Wayne Meredith?"

"I will write him to-night severing our engagement."

"What reason will you give him?"

"That I intend marrying some one else."

"My poor child! I fear your life will be an unhappy one, marrying one man and loving another; but you have decided as I wished, for your poor father's dying request must be granted."

"Oliver Eustace is older than you are; he has led a wild life, and is a stern man; but I hope you will be happy;" and the mother kissed her daughter's pale face with a hopeful look, but in her heart there was a dread of coming sorrow.

CHAPTER IX.

A DASTARD'S ACT.

It was a dark night, and the sea moaned dismally and winds swept over the hills, while a slow rain pattered down upon the earth. It was a bad night to be upon the water, and yet, undaunted by the darkness and rain, a small boat was bounding up the coast, close-reefed, and held well in hand.

In the stern sat but one person, enveloped in storm-coat and hat, and, peering out into the darkness as his little vessel, dashed along.

Suddenly he put his helm hard down and ran straight for the shore, at a point that brought him between the earthen arms of a small basin.

As if knowing the channel well he held his little craft on its course, crossed the harbor, and brought up alongside a small pier.

Upon the hill above, dimly visible, was a small cottage; it was the home of the Blanchards.

Making his boat fast and lowering his sail, the man walked rapidly up the pathway and knocked at the door of the cottage, and, a moment after, disappeared within.

Hardly had the door closed upon his form, when into the basin darted another small craft, hardly larger than the one that had preceded it.

This one, too, held its way across the little harbor, and landed at the pier, while from the stern emerged a single form, also wrapped in a storm-suit.

Ascending the hill he halted at the balcony, as he heard voices within, and cautiously approached a half-open window, nearly covered by a trailing vine.

From his position he could see within the room and also hear all that was said.

"It is a fearful night for you to come here, and in a boat too," said Lulu Blanchard, who a moment before had entered the room and greeted her visitor, Wayne Meredith.

"I could not stay away, and I was forced to come in my boat, as I had sold my horses, not expecting to be at home during the war, which you know has been declared."

"Yes, and you are going?" said Lulu, in a constrained tone.

"Of course; I could not remain at home when my country needed my services; but, Lulu, I received your letter, and I have come to ask you what it means?"

"You read it carefully?"

"Yes."

"Then you should know, Lieutenant Meredith."

"No, Miss Blanchard, I wish to hear from your own lips that I am cast aside—am I to understand that you have pledged yourself to become another man's wife?"

"I have."

"Oh, Lulu, how could you do this?" and the voice of the young man trembled.

Lulu made no immediate answer: when Dinah told her that Lieutenant Meredith was in the parlor she had at first refused to see him, but her mother had urged that she would, and she had done so, avowing to herself that she would be as cold as an icicle.

Now that he was before her, begging for her love, her strength of will was gone, and she broke out passionately.

"I will tell you why I wrote you that letter—I will tell you why I intend to marry another, and then you will pity, not hate me. Here, read this, and you will see that I but prove myself a dutiful daughter to my poor, dear, dead father."

She read Wayne Meredith the letter twice through, slowly, withholding the name of Oliver Eustace, and then, like a lawyer, he began to dissect it, and said:

"Your father, Lulu, says, believing he is doing that for your good, and planning for your happiness he urges it; but suppose he were here to know how unhappy it makes you to marry this person—"

"Oliver Eustace," she said, without thinking.

"Great God! Oliver Eustace! He is my uncle Eustace's son, he who was disowned—why did you not speak of this before?"

"Feeling that it might pain you, my mother thought it best that we should not speak of him to you."

Wayne Meredith walked back and forth several times, excitedly; then he said:

"Lulu, when I was a very little boy I met, at the mansion left me by my uncle, Oliver Eustace, and we were never friends, for he had an overbearing nature I did not like, and one day gave me a severe blow for separating two dogs that he had set to fighting; he was a wild fellow, and I have heard hard stories of him, but for their truth I do not vouch; I only know that his evil conduct shortened his father's life, and that I was made heir to the property that should have been his, and it pains me deeply at times to feel that I have the wealth that by rights should have been the inheritance of my cousin, Oliver."

"Several times I have written to him, offering him a fair income, but no answer to my letters has been returned, and I believed him dead and in a foreign land."

"Now he comes up as your intended husband—to take from me the one I loved more than all else in the world, in return for the fortune I have taken from him; but, Lulu, if you say that you will marry him, I will yield, and most gladly will I restore to him all that I inherited from his father."

"I have ample means besides, and my sword will bring me more."

"Wayne Meredith, you are a noble man. No, I feel that it would be a sin to marry one man loving another, and if you will take me back I will be yours."

The form at the window glided swiftly away, fled down the hill and halted upon the pier.

A boat had been hauled up on the pier for repairs, and behind this he crouched, unmindful of the beating storm.

With the patience of a tiger lying in wait for his prey, the man waited. An hour passed, and then a bright light streamed out from the cottage door and darkness followed.

Slowly down the hillside came a form—the same who had come in the first boat.

He passed the crouching form, unsuspecting of danger, and stooped to untie his boat.

Then from his covert the other sprung upon him; a knife descended deep into the exposed back, was withdrawn, and the assassin bounded into his own boat, cut it loose, and sped away out of the basin, facing the pitiless storm and daring the raging waters in his flight from the dark form lying upon the pier.

Hardly had the boat gained an offing when another person came down that hillside and hastened along the pier.

"Wayne, Wayne! you must not go to-night; the storm increases. I came after you to make you remain, when I looked out and saw what a fearful night it was."

But no answer came, only the howling of the wind and the wash of the waves.

"He has not gone, for there is his boat. He is reefing his sails, perhaps," and she stepped forward to the end of the pier.

At her feet lay a dark object, and stooping over she touched it with her hand; then, above the wail of the storm, arose a wild shriek upon the air, and Lulu Blanchard fell prone upon the body of Wayne Meredith.

But her shriek was heard, and Enoch and Dick,

the colored hired-man, came hurrying down to the shore, where they found Lulu lying insensible across the body of Wayne Meredith.

CHAPTER X.

BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

Two days after the tragedy upon the little pier that stormy night, a vessel was seen entering the little basin in front of Sea View Cottage.

"It is the schooner, mother, though she is greatly changed; and isn't she a beauty?" said Enoch with enthusiasm.

"She will bear you from me, my son—perhaps to your death, as she did your father. These are desperate times Enoch," said the widow sadly; then she continued:

"Go down and meet Captain Eustace; he will be surprised to know of the terrible affair that has happened here."

Enoch hastened down to the pier, and the schooner having come to anchor, he returned with Oliver Eustace, who told him that his uniform was aboard waiting for him, and that the next day he wished to sail.

"I am ready, sir; but I dislike, particularly just now, to leave my poor mother and sister, for we have had a terrible shock since you were last here."

"Indeed! what was it?" asked Oliver Eustace.

"I suppose you know, sir, that we are acquainted with the one who was your father's heir, Lieutenant Wayne Meredith? Well, he came to see Lulu the other night, the night it stormed so, and not wishing him to return in his boat with the wind blowing a gale, shortly after he left, Lulu ran down to the pier to stop him."

"We heard a shriek, and Dick and myself ran down to the shore and found my sister had fainted, and was lying beside Lieutenant Meredith who was—"

"Dead?" said Captain Eustace, with some eagerness, and surprise.

"No, sir, but fearfully wounded, for a knife had been driven into his back. We carried him to the house, and Dick went after Doctor North, who pronounced him fatally wounded at first; but he has now some hopes of his recovery."

"Have you no clew as to who did the deed?"

"Oh, yes, we all think it was one of the band of smugglers, whom Lieutenant Meredith captured, you remember, some time since?"

"Yes, I was ill at the time; but I heard of the capture: you are doubtless right, for those smugglers are revengeful fellows; but how are your mother and sister?"

"They are very blue, but well. Come, mother is on the balcony, but Lulu never leaves the bedside of poor Meredith. She is wrapped up in that man, and I don't blame her, as he is a noble fellow."

Reaching the cottage, Mrs. Blanchard greeted Captain Eustace kindly, and he said sadly:

"I am distressed to hear of the sad affair about my poor young kinsman, and I will not sail as soon as I intended, as it is my duty to nurse him until he is out of danger, for I feel no enmity against him, Mrs. Blanchard, for being in my shoes; I brought it all on myself."

"You are noble to speak thus, Oliver, and every time we see you, we discover some new good trait in your character; but come in and see Lieutenant Meredith. Poor fellow, he is unable to recognize even Lulu who is devoted in her attentions to him."

Oliver Eustace followed Mrs. Blanchard into the sick-room—the same where he had long lain ill.

Lulu was seated by the side of the wounded man, fanning him, and she was pale and haggard; but as she saw who it was with her mother, she turned a deadlier hue, and simply bent her head in response to his words to her.

"Poor fellow!" and Oliver Eustace bent over his wounded cousin.

"He is the same handsome fellow he was when I last saw him, only he is a man now, and one who has won quite a name for himself."

"We must not let him die, Lulu, for he must live to enjoy his wealth, but it was an ugly wound he received. Strange it did not kill him."

"The assassin tried hard to do so," broke from Lulu's lips.

"No doubt; but he failed, and with good care he will pull through all right. I will help you nurse him, for you look broken down," said the captain, kindly.

"Oh, no; I am not tired, only the shock to my nerves was terrible. It was I that found him on the pier."

"So Enoch told me. But you must rest. We will not sail for several days, and I will relieve you as nurse. I will go back on board the schooner and return after dark," and Captain Eustace left the room, Lulu still remaining at her post by the bedside of her lover.

Several days after the arrival of the schooner—now metamorphosed into a privateer—in the basin, Oliver Eustace entered the room where Wayne Meredith lay, followed by a man in a seaman's attire.

Lulu was seated, as usual, by the side of the patient, though her face was less pale and haggard, as now there were strong hopes of the recovery of the wounded man, and then Oliver Eustace had relieved her in her duties, and each night had sat up with his cousin, and been as kind and good a nurse as a woman would have been.

Lulu glanced up with surprise at the entrance of the seaman, who doffed his tarpaulin politely.

"Lulu, this man was an old sailor on the lieutenant's ship, and came aboard the schooner just now, thinking it was Meredith's vessel, and wishing to re-ship with his old officer."

"When I told him that the lieutenant had been badly wounded, he showed such a deep sympathy, and begged so to see him, that I brought him with—"

me, and I shall give him a berth on board the schooner."

Lulu felt most kindly toward the sailor at once; any one who liked Wayne Meredith, Lulu liked, and she said kindly:

"The lieutenant is better now, but we feared for his life for several days."

"Yes, miss; it's a bad place to drive a knife, in the back, miss. I was wounded that way myself, miss, in Spain, when I was cruisin' with the lieutenant here, but he was but a middy then."

"Some one attempted to kill you then?" asked Lulu.

"Fact, miss; it were a woman as got jealous 'cause I dropped her for another. Them Spanish women is jealous devils, miss, an' quick with knives. She drove hers deep into my back, just where the lieutenant's wound 'pears to be," and the seaman bent over the wounded officer, who lay in a kind of stupor, unconscious of all that went on around him.

A few minutes longer the sailor stayed, chatting glibly about his cruises with the lieutenant, and then he took his departure, Lulu asking him to come again ere the schooner sailed, and perhaps the young officer would be well enough to recognize him.

When Wayne Meredith awoke from the deep stupor in which he had lain for days, he glanced curiously around, and his eyes fell upon Lulu, and he was about to speak.

But she put her finger playfully upon his lips, and told him all that had happened, bidding him, if he wished to get well, to keep perfectly quiet.

"Doctor North comes twice a day to see you, and you have a good hired nurse; but I watch by you most of the time, and mother and one other help me, so that you are well cared for, and will soon be well again."

"God bless you, Lulu," said Wayne, faintly, and he dropped off into a quiet sleep.

That night Lulu's heart beat more lightly than it had for days; Wayne Meredith was better, and would improve rapidly, so said the doctor, and the maiden retired to rest, leaving the hired nurse—a man the doctor had brought—to watch by the side of the patient.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

THOUGH Lulu retired to rest at an early hour, and soon dropped off into pleasant slumber, it did not last long, for she awoke with a weight upon her heart; a dread of coming evil seemed to oppress her.

"It is nonsense for me to feel thus; he is much better, and will soon be well, the doctor said," and with this consolation to herself, she tried to go to sleep once more; but though she had lost a great deal of rest, and was fatigued with anxious watching, slumber would not come to her eyelids, and she became so nervous she thought that she would get up and go to her mother's room.

This she at length determined not to do, for her mother needed all the rest she could get, she thought.

It was dark all around her, and the house was as silent as the grave, so she knew that it must be quite late.

At length she could stand it no longer; she would get up, throw her wrapper on and steal in to see if any change had come over Wayne Meredith, for toward him her whole anxiety centered.

Winding her hair about her head, throwing on her wrapper, and sliding into her slippers, all of which she readily found in the dark, she glided from her room and turned into the hall leading into the wing of the cottage where was situated the pleasant, large room of the wounded man.

Not to disturb him, if he slept, she noiselessly turned the knob, and pushing the door slightly open, glanced within.

A taper burned on the hearth, but the interior of the room was faintly visible, and she beheld the invalid sleeping soundly, and the nurse also asleep in his chair.

But another form met her astonished gaze—the form of a man gliding along without the slightest sound, and her breath was almost taken away as an overpowering fragrance filled her nostrils.

She knew at once that it was chloroform—what could it mean?

Again she turned her eyes upon the creeping figure, for some strange power held her immovable; her eyes only seemed to possess the strength to move.

Nearer and nearer the figure came to the bed of the invalid, and then hung over him, while one hand gently drew away the covering from the left side, which was uppermost.

Then the other arm of the midnight visitor was raised, and seemed to be poised in the air; but in the clenched hand Lulu beheld a gleam of light.

It was the glare of the taper upon steel. The man held a knife in his right hand, and it was pointed at the heart of Wayne Meredith.

Then the lips of Lulu Blanchard were unsealed, and a wild cry broke forth as she bounded into the room like an enraged tigress.

The knife dropped from the nerveless hand of the intended assassin, and he turned to fly; but the maiden confronted him, seized him, and clung to him with the energy of despair.

"Murderer, you shall not fly!" she cried in thrilling tones.

"Unloose me, girl, or I'll kill you," shouted the man; but undaunted she held on.

Then the man's rough fingers clutched at her white delicate throat, and she was hurled from him with the strength of one who knew that his life was at stake.

Half stunned though she was by her fall, and the

clutch of iron that had grasped her throat, Lulu again cried for help, as the ruffian bounded for the door.

"Oh! he has gone! he has gone!" she shrieked, as she saw him dart out into the hallway.

But no, there was a stern voice heard without, a struggle, a fall, and Enoch Blanchard shouted:

"I have caught him; bring a light, quick."

At this moment Mrs. Blanchard appeared from her room, as white as a ghost, and bearing a lamp.

Upon the hall floor lay the form of a man, a red gash on his forehead, and over him stood Enoch Blanchard, half dressed, and with a small hammer, which he had hastily seized, in his hand.

"He ran upon me, and hearing your cry, sis, I knocked him down. What has he done?" said the youth.

"Thank God he is captured. Is he dead?" she asked, with a tremor.

"Oh, no; he is only stunned. Go to my room, and bring me a rope so that I can tie him."

"Here is your flag halyard, Enoch," and Lulu handed him the cord she saw hanging on a peg in the hall.

"This will do; but what has he done, sis? You and mother look as white as ghosts, and your shrieks must have been heard on board the schooner."

"He came to murder Wayne Meredith. I saw him bending over the bed, with a knife in his hand, and he dropped it when I called out. The nurse has not moved, and he may be dead."

Having bound his prisoner Enoch rushed into the room, his mother and sister now wholly unnerved.

"The room is filled with the odor of chloroform, and the nurse is unconscious, but not hurt, I think. Come, open the doors and aid me, or they may die," he called out.

Both Lulu and her mother now sprung quickly to work. The windows and doors were opened, and a draught through the room revived the nurse and Wayne Meredith, for he, also, was under its influence.

Upon the bed was found the intended assassin's knife, a long, bright, and slender blade, which Enoch at once took possession of, as he turned again to see about his prisoner, leaving the lieutenant to the care of his mother and sister, for the nurse sat stupidly in his chair, not yet having regained his senses.

"Come here, sis. Isn't this the fellow who was here with Captain Eustace?"

"It is the very man; he said he was an old sailor with Lieutenant Meredith. Oh! how could you be so wicked?" and Lulu turned her eyes indignantly upon the sailor, who was now sitting upon the floor, his arms and ankles bound, and the blood dripping from the wound on his head.

The man made no reply. He bowed his head and was sullen.

"What will you do with him, Enoch?" asked Lulu.

"Where is the nurse?"

"Here I am, sir," and that worthy came forward.

"What does all this mean?" asked Enoch, fixing his eyes upon him.

"I do not know, sir. I was leaning back in my chair, half-asleep, and the lieutenant was sleeping well, when I suddenly dreamed that I was inhaling delightful perfumes; I now know that I was being chloroformed, and your mother tells me this man attempted to assassinate Mr. Meredith."

"He did, and would have succeeded, had it not been for my brave sister. Now, keep your eyes open, for I am going to take this fellow where he will do no more harm. I suppose he is one of the smuggler band."

"Where would you take him, Enoch?"

"On board the schooner, sis, and put him in double-irons, until we make an ear-ring for the yard-arm with him. Come, sir."

The man looked quickly up, a strange expression on his face, and, without a word, arose and stood before his young captor, though he staggered slightly, apparently from weakness.

"I'll soon be back, sis. Look after Mr. Meredith, and tell him this fellow won't trouble him any more," and Enoch left the cottage, pulling his prisoner along after him.

Arriving at the pier he made him get into a small skiff, and springing in himself seized the oars and pulled out to the schooner.

"Boat ahoy!" hailed the alert watchman.

"Ay, ay, I am coming on board to see Captain Eustace. I am Enoch Blanchard."

"All right, sir," answered the guard, and a moment after the youth and his prisoner stood in the cabin before the just awakened and surprised Oliver Eustace.

"Captain, here is one of your crew that I caught in the cottage half an hour ago; he chloroformed the nurse, and then attempted to drive his knife into Lieutenant Meredith's heart, but was fortunately discovered by my sister, whom he hurled to the floor in rushing from the room."

"He did not injure either Mr. Meredith or the nurse?"

"Fortunately, no; but he needs hanging for the attempt."

Captain Eustace turned upon the culprit and said, sternly:

"What was your motive, sir, in this foul act?"

The man looked him squarely in the face and said in a deep voice:

"Revenge prompted it."

"How did you leave the schooner?"

"I swam ashore just after dark."

Captain Eustace was silent a moment, and then he called out:

"Ho, on deck, there!"

"Ay, ay, sir," and a seaman entered the cabin.

"Lead this man to Mr. Milroy and tell him to put him in double irons."

The prisoner was led away, and Oliver Eustace turned to Enoch:

"I will go on shore with you; I would see your mother and sister."

Ten minutes after the two were in the skiff rowing shoreward, on their way to the cottage, against the inmates of which Fate seemed to hold a settled grudge.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEA WOLF.

THE deep boom of a heavy gun awakened Wayne Meredith from a sweet sleep, the morning following the night of the second attack upon his life by an assassin.

But, in spite of the danger he had just passed through, he was apparently much improved; his eyes were brighter, and the wound in his back was healing rapidly.

"One, two, three," and the wounded officer went on counting the guns until twenty-one were fired.

"What can it mean? At first I feared it was an action between one of our cruisers and an Englishman; but the firing is a salute of some kind."

"Oh that I were not bound down here!" and with an impatient gesture the officer began to drum with his fingers upon the head-board.

A few moments after Lulu entered, her face stained with tears; but seeing the improved appearance of her patient she brightened up.

"I am so glad you are better; I feared last night's affair would cause you to relapse."

"Oh, no; it seemed like a dream to me, that is all; but, what is that firing, Lulu, and why these tears?"

"The schooner has put to sea, and Captain Eustace was saluting his new flag—a red wolf upon a black field. A strange conceit, is it not?"

"Yes; has he changed the name of the Light Wing?"

"Yes, to the Sea Wolf, and he seems very bitter toward our enemies, the English."

"Strange! He is an Englishman by birth himself, his father coming to America when his son was five years of age. Your brother has gone, then?"

"Yes; he came in to say good-by, but seeing you sleeping would not disturb you; but do you know, Wayne, I do not feel easy about Enoch's being with Captain Eustace?"

"I suppose he will be a good commander to him, owing as he does his present position to your father, and the schooner, as your mother informed me, belonging to Enoch."

"Yes, mother gave him the vessel, and it was armed and equipped at her expense—that is with the money made on the cruise south; still I wish Enoch had not gone."

"I would prefer to have him with me in the regular service, for I could have given him a midshipman's berth; and these privateers are looked upon, in many cases, as lawless; but I hope my cousin's good sense will keep him from doing aught that outlaws him."

"I hope so; but I fear he is a stern, resolute man, who will follow the bent of his own humor; now, last night, after he came on shore to see us, he suddenly made up his mind to put to sea this morning, and ordered Enoch aboard at sunrise."

"Did he say when he would return?"

"In about two months, he thought."

"One question more, Lulu; did he again press his suit with you?"

The maiden's face flushed, but she answered frankly:

"He did."

"And you answered?"

"That I was sorry to pain him, and it made me unhappy to go against the dying wish of my father, but I could not marry him."

"I suppose he was very angry?"

"Oh, no; on the contrary, he seemed only deeply hurt, and said he hoped that I would be happy with—"

"With who, Lulu?" as the maiden paused.

"With—I use his words, Wayne: 'the man who had taken from him his inheritance and the woman that should have been his wife.'"

The pale face of Wayne Meredith flushed crimson, but he made no other reply than to say:

"If I prove unworthy of your love, Lulu, I will be sorry that the assassin's knife did not find my heart."

While this conversation was going on in the Sea View Cottage, the schooner, now known as the Sea Wolf, was standing out into the broad bosom of the Atlantic under easy canvas.

Leaning over the taffrail gazing wistfully at the receding shores, was Enoch Blanchard, looking exceedingly handsome in his stylish uniform of third officer, or lieutenant, as Captain Eustace called his officers.

As the white glimmer of the cottage faded away in the distance, Enoch turned and found the eyes of his commander fastened upon him.

"Well, Lieutenant Blanchard, you have had your last look at home, so now I suppose you are ready for duty?"

The tone and manner were stern, and very different from the usual style of Captain Eustace in addressing him; but Enoch supposed that it was a rule of the ship to hold no intimacy with under officers, and he promptly answered:

"I am at your service, sir."

"Very well, in half an hour relieve Milroy as officer of the deck; Lieutenant Milroy, this is your brother officer, Lieutenant Blanchard—I believe you have met Lieutenant Talmadge?"

Enoch bowed to the introduction, and replied to the question:

"Yes, sir; I met Lieutenant Talmadge when I first came on board," and he glanced into the faces of the two officers, and at once made up his mind that he did not like them—they were young men, both of them, yet upon the faces of each rested a look of recklessness and dissipation that was not prepossessing.

Still they might be brave and skillful officers, he thought, and he wisely determined to keep his dislikes to himself.

Glancing over the crew, a half-hundred in number, Enoch failed to recognize a single face that had sailed with his father, and thinking it strange he so remarked to his commander.

Oliver Eustace frowned, but replied shortly:

"Those were peace sailors—these I have now are for hot work at the cannon's mouth."

"There were some on the schooner who had sailed with my father for many years, and braver men never lived than they were."

"I am the best judge of my own crew, Lieutenant Blanchard, and let me give you one piece of advice: if you don't want trouble with your commander, do not question his acts."

Enoch's face flushed; but he made no remark, and walking forward relieved Lieutenant Milroy as officer of the deck, a post he was in every way capable to fill, thanks to his love of the sea and the instructions his father had given him from almost his babyhood.

"How shall I head, sir?" asked Enoch, when the helmsman informed him he had gone to windward as far as he had been told.

"Due north, sir—my destination is Halifax, Nova Scotia; I wish to increase my crew there to a hundred men."

"That is an English port, sir," said Enoch, in undisguised surprise.

"Lieutenant Blanchard, I gave you a piece of advice a while since, and I now advise you to profit by it—my destination, sir, is Halifax—my intention, to run the *American* privateer, *Sea Wolf*, into the English port of Halifax; do you understand?"

"I do, sir," and Enoch gave the order how to steer; but over him came a suspicion that all was not well in the schooner—the strange conduct of Oliver Eustace, the wild-looking crew, the reckless-appearing young officers, struck him as being far different from what his father would have chosen, and now the startling determination of his commander to take an American vessel into an English port—all these circumstances set the youth to thinking, and he made up his mind, come what might, he would not be caught napping.

As he glanced forward, his eyes fell upon a face that made him start—it was that of the midnight visitor to *Sea View Cottage*—the man who had attempted the life of Wayne Meredith.

There he now stood among the crew, his tarpaulin pulled down over the cut on his forehead.

Surprised, and determined once more to question his captain, Enoch walked to the cabin companion-way.

"Captain Eustace!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came in blunt tones.

"The seaman who attempted to assassinate Lieutenant Meredith, and whom you ordered in irons, is free on deck."

"I know it, sir. I ordered him released for duty."

Enoch turned away without a word, and his growing suspicions were greatly increased. Either Oliver Eustace was playing some bold game, or he was a very different man on the deck of his vessel than what he was on shore.

"He was a true friend to my father, and I have no right to doubt him. But what does it all mean?" and the puzzled youth paced the deck, a cloud upon his young brow.

CHAPTER XIII.

UNDER TWO FLAGS.

In a few days after, heading on her course north, north-east, the *Sea-Wolf* came off Sambro Light just at break of dawn one morning, and Enoch, who held the deck, observed a large vessel-of-war lying to, not a league from the schooner.

The vessel was a ship-of-the-line, had the wind of the schooner, had displayed no lights, and, seemingly, was lying in wait for some craft that might run unexpectedly into her vicinity, as had the *Sea-Wolf*.

With the shore upon her larboard-quarter, and the vessel-of-war to seaward, the schooner was in a precarious situation, if the huge ship to windward should prove to be an enemy.

The hull and rig of the stranger were American, but then it might be English; and Enoch at once squared away dead before the wind at first sight of the stranger, determined to run close in shore, and, if he could not get to sea, find some inlet to hide in where the ship dare not follow.

The schooner had dashed along some five minutes on her new course ere she was discovered by those on the ship, and then men were seen running into the rigging, the sails were let fall, and the bows of the stranger soon swung round in pursuit, while a shot was fired at the flying craft, the ball whizzing above the deck.

"That fellow looks American; but we must find out ere we trust him too far. Run up the flag, Lieutenant Blanchard," said Oliver Eustace, who just then came upon deck.

The Stars and Stripes at once fluttered from the peak of the *Sea Wolf*, and immediately after the stranger showed the same colors, at the same time signalling her name.

"It is the *Constitution*, 44 guns, Captain Isaac Hull—put the schooner about and head for the ship, Lieutenant Blanchard."

"Ay, ay, sir," and Enoch at once obeyed the order,

and in half an hour rounded to under the stern of the *Constitution*.

"Go aboard, Lieutenant Blanchard, and make known to Captain Hull who and what we are, and that we are off Halifax, hoping for a prize; ask him if he has any orders," said Captain Eustace, and calling away a boat, and attired in his best uniform, Enoch Blanchard rowed to the vessel which had already won a proud name, and was destined to afterward win a world-wide renown.

He was ushered into the cabin by a lieutenant who met him at the gangway, and saluted politely Captain Isaac Hull, who made a few inquiries regarding the schooner, spoke of the beauty of the vessel, and complimented the boy-officer who had boarded him, for his manliness in shipping in the service of his country.

When Enoch left the *Constitution* it was with a proud heart; but yet he was troubled in mind, for he felt that he should have made known to Captain Hull the strange conduct of his captain, and be what might the consequences to himself, at least have the satisfaction of having done his duty.

As he stepped upon the schooner when he returned, Oliver Eustace met him:

"Well, sir, did you say that we were bound into Halifax?" he asked, sternly.

"I did not, sir; I said what you told me to say, but I regret now that I did not make known the strange intention you have of going into an enemy's port."

Captain Eustace turned angrily upon his young officer, but made no angry retort, as Enoch had expected; he said, simply:

"Run directly for Halifax, Lieutenant Blanchard."

Enoch quietly gave the order, and before long the *Sea Wolf* received a shot from a vessel lying close in shore and flying the English colors.

Oliver Eustace at once hoisted the ensign of Great Britain, and headed up the harbor, the brig of war seeing this action evidently holding no suspicion of his being an enemy, and letting him go on his course.

Passing the forts, with the British flag flying, and a salute, the *Sea Wolf* entered the harbor and stood close in shore to an anchorage, the beauty of the privateer attracting considerable admiration from the crews of the different vessels at anchor around.

"Lieutenant Milroy, call alongside my cutter, fully manned, and allow no one to leave the schooner or come on board during my absence," said Oliver Eustace, coming from the cabin in full-dress uniform.

Entering his boat he rowed ashore, and landing, disappeared from sight as he trudged up the steep hillside.

Late in the afternoon he returned, and there was a strange look upon his face.

"Lieutenant Blanchard, bid the steward prepare supper for a dozen—I expect a party of friends this evening; he will find stores in the boat alongside."

Without a word Enoch obeyed the order, but there was in his heart a strange doubt—what could all this mean?

At sunset three boats came alongside the schooner, and a number of persons, several civilians, three or four army officers, and several naval officers, all in the British uniform, came on board, and were received at the gangway by Lieutenant Milroy and ushered into the cabin where Captain Eustace awaited them.

Half an hour after the steward came to Enoch and said:

"Captain Eustace sends his compliments to Lieutenant Blanchard, and begs to have him join him in the cabin."

Silently the youth obeyed, and when entering was motioned to a seat at the table by his commander, and then presented to the guests.

Enoch bowed politely, while many turned an admiring glance upon his youthful, handsome face, and elegant form; but his heart was troubled—what meant these English guests in an American schooner?

It was a sumptuous repast, and the wine flowed freely from the separate courses; but at length Oliver Eustace arose, and filling his glass, said, in his deep, stern tones:

"Gentlemen, I have to offer as a toast, the health of His Majesty, the King of Great Britain, and the success of the Army and Navy of England in the present war against America."

With a cheer all sprung to their feet, glasses in hand—all except one.

That one was Enoch Blanchard: he remained seated, his brow clouded, his lips compressed, his face white with indignation.

"Lieutenant Blanchard, arise, sir," commanded Oliver Eustace, his eye resting upon the youth.

"I'll not drink such a toast, sir—I respect our foes, and if they can conquer us, so let it be; but I am an American, and as such came on this schooner," and with flashing eyes Enoch Blanchard arose to his feet and looked upon the assembled guests.

"What do I hear? You refuse to drink the toast?" shouted Oliver Eustace.

"I do, sir, and you dishonor yourself in offering it." There was no mistaking the words or manner of Enoch Blanchard; he was in deadly earnest.

"Lieutenant Blanchard, I command you to drink the toast I offer," and Captain Eustace's voice trembled as he spoke.

"And I decline, sir," as firmly said the youth.

"Mutiny, by Jove! gentlemen, I told you I held doubt of one of my officers; but he shall drink as I say," and Oliver Eustace walked around the table and faced the youth.

"Drink, sir, as I command you."

All was now breathless excitement; the guests, the two Privateer officers, and the servants looking on with deepest interest.

"Never, sir," and the eyes of Enoch Blanchard never quailed.

"Boy, you are a fool."

Instantly Enoch turned upon the speaker: it was a major of Dragoons, a man of forty, and dressed in a superb uniform and with faultless linen.

Quicker than a flash Enoch raised his glass of wine and dashed the contents full in the face of the major.

The excitement was now at fever heat, and all cried out in surprise; but Enoch remained perfectly cool, glancing upon the half-strangled major.

"Milroy, put that boy in irons," yelled Captain Eustace, savagely.

"No, no," cried half a dozen officers, who wished to see fair play.

"If the young gentleman does not wish to drink the toast he has a right to decline, and Major McCarthyne gave the first insult," said a gentleman in the uniform of an English naval captain.

"Yes, let him at least remain at liberty until he gives me satisfaction for this insult," cried the major, enraged almost beyond self-control.

"I am at your service, sir. I but resented your remark to me, and if Captain Eustace expects me to sail under two flags and be friendly to both, he will have to put me in irons for disobedience of orders," said Enoch, calmly.

"McCarthyne, do you wish to meet this boy?" asked Oliver Eustace, turning to the major.

"I do—he has insulted me grossly."

"He is a mere youth, McCarthyne," said the naval captain, while several others cried:

"For shame—he is but a boy."

"He is young in years, I admit; but he is every inch a man, and his rank as a lieutenant, weighs against his age," said Oliver Eustace, who seemed to wish to urge on the affair.

"If he was a child he should not insult me without punishment for it—if he is not afraid to face me I will call him out," angrily said the major.

"I do not fear you, sir; I seem to be alone here, that is without a friend upon my own vessel, but—"

"No, sir, we will not let other than fair play be shown you; we are British officers, sir," said an elderly man, kindly.

"And I will serve as your friend," returned the naval captain, stepping forward and offering his hand, which Enoch grasped with a look of gratitude, while he said calmly:

"I thank you, sir; then Major McCarthyne can let his friend arrange a meeting with you, sir, and I leave all in your hands," and turning, Enoch left the cabin.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DUEL BY MOONLIGHT.

WHEN Enoch Blanchard walked on deck, out of the cabin where had just transpired such an exciting scene, he found the moon rising in all its beauty, from the Atlantic, and casting a flood of silver light upon the sea and shore.

Landward a thousand lights twinkled in the town, and in the harbor the vessels at anchor were distinctly visible, while above the city, upon a lofty hill, frowned a fort, the moonlight flashing upon the guard's musket as he turned in his monotonous walk.

But the scene held little beauty for him, and he leant over the taffrail, gazing down into the dark waters, his brain whirling with conflicting emotions.

"Oh, that I had made known my suspicions to Captain Hull this morning; the *Constitution* would have soon checked the career of this schooner, and she would not now be lying in an enemy's port."

"I have been betrayed by one whom I trusted; one whom I loved almost as a father. Who could have believed Oliver Eustace so base a man?"

"But I would not drink the toast he proposed; I would have gone in irons first, and if he had asked me again I should have resented it by throwing the glass of wine in his face, for whom I intended it, if he drove me to it; but I am glad that English major turned it upon him, for I cared not to meet Oliver Eustace in deadly combat. No, no! he was kind to my father—he held my poor father when he breathed his last; but, oh! I must blame him for turning a traitor. Why did he not go with England, if such were his principles, and not turn traitor to those who trusted him?"

"Well, I must meet this irate major—and then? Will it be the Englishman or myself that falls?"

"If me, my poor mother and sister, I fear it will break their hearts, for fate has been unkind of late, and haunted our little home with shadows."

"But, whether I fall or live, I am in a tight place here, for enemies surround me."

At this moment the naval captain, who had offered his services as his friend, approached him:

"Mr. Blanchard, I have arranged with Major McCarthyne's friend, Captain De Wees, and as it is a glorious night and unpleasant duties should not be postponed, we have agreed to meet to-night—nay, within the hour. We will row down the harbor to a lonely place, and there you can have the matter settled."

"I thank you, sir. With what weapons, may I ask?" calmly said Eustace.

"The pistol—have you a pair?"

"Yes, sir; a very fine pair of dueling pistols that belonged to my grandfather; in fact he fought several duels with them when he was an officer in the English navy."

"You are English, then?"

"Oh, no, sir; my grandfather settled in the colonies, and served in the American navy during our war of independence, and my father was born in Boston."

"Can I ask if you know how the duels turned out

that your grandfather fought?" asked Captain Revelle, with some interest.

"He was successful in three affairs."

"That is, killed his man?"

"Yes, sir. In those days, you know, dueling was an everyday affair."

"True; and those were all that he fought?"

"No, sir; he fought a fourth duel in which he lost his life. His opponent, a British officer, fired before he word; and, by the way, his name was McCarthy."

"Holy Neptune! You are right. I remember having heard of the affair—it occurred in Jamaica, and the McCarthy who killed your grandfather was the father of the one you are to meet. This is a strange coincidence."

"It is indeed, sir; and I have an opportunity of avenging my grandfather, who was not slain fairly."

"True: McCarthy was much censured for his action; but where are your pistols?"

Enoch went into the cabin and soon returned with them.

"Here they are, sir. This is the one my grandfather always used, and he had it in his hand when he was killed."

"Which will you use?"

"The same weapon; and I have written my mother a short note which, if I fall, I trust to your kindness, sir, to send to her; it contains nothing contraband," and Enoch gave the letter to the kind-hearted Englishman, who said, warmly:

"I will see that she gets it if you fall; but I doubt if you do, for you seem to have an iron nerve; but, McCarthy is a crack shot and a good swordsman, and rather relishes an affair of this kind—in fact, he has made himself quite unpopular by his anxiety to fight almost without provocation, and American though you are, few Englishmen would blame you if you killed him."

"Keep your eye on him; fire at the word, and aim at his head, if you are a crack shot; if not, aim at his body. Now, are you ready?"

"I am, sir."

Captain Revelle entered the cabin, and, in ten minutes more, the boats were called alongside, and the whole party embarked, many of them elated by the wine they had drunk.

A row of half an hour brought them to a wooded point upon which they landed, and Captain Revelle and the second of Major McCarthy stepped off the distance, placed their principals, and loaded the pistols, those of Enoch Blanchard having been chosen.

Major McCarthy had not recovered his equanimity at having been so ill-treated by one whom he called a "Yankee boy," and he took his stand with the determination to kill him.

"If he were one of ourselves, young as he is, I would but *wing* him; but a d—d Yankee, I will do my country a service by killing him," he said to his second, and in a tone loud enough for Enoch to hear.

Enoch quietly took his stand, grasped warmly the proffered hand of Captain Revelle, who whispered:

"Fire at his head, and fire at the word; don't let him get the first shot at you. You are as cool as an iceberg, and it disconcerts him."

Then Captain Revelle took his position to one side, and the moonlight streamed down upon the strange scene, lighting up the faces of each one there, and showing the admiration that many felt for the splendid pluck of the youth.

At one side stood Oliver Eustace, his face pale, stern, and with a look upon it that Enoch, who glanced at him, could not fathom.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

The voice of Captain De Wees broke the death-like silence.

"Ready," said both men together.

"Fire!"

Ere more could be said, and with the sound of the word on his lips still, the pistols flashed, the weapon of Enoch's half-a-second in advance of his adversary's, yet so close together as to almost sound like one report.

Like a log Major McCarthy fell in his tracks, stone dead; the bullet had passed through his brain.

The half-second's start Enoch had of his foe had saved his life, for it had deranged the aim of the major, whose bullet whistled by the youth's head, not missing it a quarter of an inch.

All stood spellbound, as Captain De Wees sprung forward, and cried:

"He is dead!"

Enoch turned sadly away. He had not sought the quarrel, and he cared not to have the life of a fellow-being upon his hands. But when insulted he had resented it, and when challenged he had faced the alternative without dread.

Captain Revelle stepped forward and offered his hand, saying in a low tone:

"No veteran ever behaved better than you did: you have avenged your grandfather, and have slain a most dangerous man."

Others also came forward and spoke kindly to the youth, and the body of Major McCarthy having been borne to the boat, the party started upon their return to the schooner, for they accepted Captain Eustace's invitation to stop and have a glass of wine with him.

As Enoch stepped on deck his commander turned to him and said, sternly:

"I shall offer the same toast, sir. Will you still refuse to drink it?"

"Assuredly, sir."

Lieutenant Milroy, place this fellow in irons," and Oliver Eustace went below, followed by his guests, one of whom stopped and said to Enoch:

"My young friend, your commander seems to have an unfortunate grudge against you, and I advise you to leave his vessel as soon as you can: when his anger blows over he will doubtless release you; but

if you need a friend do not hesitate to call upon me—my name is Sir Vincent Revelle, and I command yonder schooner of war, the St. Lawrence, aboard which I can offer you the berth of midshipman."

"I thank you sincerely, Captain Revelle, but I will never serve against my country, sir. Good-by, sir, and I hope we may meet again," and Enoch Blanchard turned toward Lieutenant Milroy, who approached with the irons in his hands.

Holding out his arms without a word, but with trembling lip, he submitted quietly to the disgrace inflicted upon him by Oliver Eustace, and was led below, while Sir Vincent Revelle, with an angry brow, went over the side of the schooner into his own boat waiting alongside, and rowed to his vessel without a word of farewell to his host.

"If he looks upon it as an insult, I am perfectly willing he shall: the boy has been badly treated for some cause or other, and he is a noble fellow and will make his mark yet in the service of his country," and so saying Captain Revelle boarded his own beautiful vessel.

CHAPTER XV.

A SECRET MISSION.

It was late in the night when Enoch Blanchard at last lost consciousness in slumber. He had heard the clinking of glasses in the cabin, loud voices in conversation, and his own name mentioned in tones certainly not uncomplimentary, and then had followed voices in song, and then the departure of the guests.

Then he expected a visit from Oliver Eustace, and he determined to tell him exactly what he thought of his conduct; but in this he was mistaken, for the privateer captain sought his couch after the departure of his guests, one of whom was then in death's last sleep ashore, whither his second had taken him, instead of coming on board the schooner.

At last was it that Enoch dropped off to sleep, and when he awoke he knew by the motion of the vessel that he was at sea, and that the schooner was running along at a lively pace.

It was broad daylight, and he glanced at his watch and found that it was nine o'clock.

"We have left Halifax, that is certain, and are in the open sea. I wonder what cruise of devilment Oliver Eustace is bound on now," muttered the youth, and as if in answer to his question, a sailor appeared before him.

"I am ordered to lead you to the cabin, sir."

Without a word Enoch arose and followed him, walking with difficulty with the irons upon him.

Oliver Eustace was seated in an easy-chair smoking, but as the youth entered he arose and approached him.

"You can leave, sir," he said to the sailor, and turning to Enoch he unlocked the irons, cast them aside, and said in a subdued tone:

"Be seated, Enoch, and listen to an explanation I have to make, and you will pardon me, I know, for the part I have played against you."

"I am listening, sir," sternly said the youth.

"You are angry with me, and I do not wonder at it; but hear my explanation."

"In commanding a vessel of this kind, one has to know those under him, and from the day I sailed from the cove of Sea View Cottage, I have been playing a part and studying those under me, in temper and in character."

"I am a bold man, Enoch, and have been playing a bold game, as you will know, for I ran into Halifax, went on shore and reported myself to the British admiral, and told him that I was an Englishman by birth, as I really am, carried him letters from prominent countrymen of his in Boston, and made known that I had armed and equipped the Sea Wolf at the expense of Americans, to run her out and then cruise against the vessels of the United States, for which I asked for a commission as a British privateer."

"Of course he gave it to me, and officers whom I met ashore I invited on board the Sea Wolf to have supper with me."

"Believing me an Englishman I had, of course, to act as such, and the more to carry out my part, I gave the toast, which I knew you would not drink, that I might have trouble with you and arrest you; but that fellow, McCarthy, had to interfere, and you finished him splendidly—I never saw more nerve than you showed."

"But what motive had you, sir, in all this?" quietly asked Enoch.

"I will tell you. I know all about the expected movements of English merchant vessels, and the stations of the British cruisers, which I can make known to the American naval officers, besides gaining a great advantage myself; also, with a commission as an English privateer I can avoid capture by our enemies should we get into a tight place. Now you know all, and I humbly ask your forgiveness for my unkind treatment to you."

"It is granted, Captain Eustace, and the unkindness forgotten—here is my hand on it."

Oliver Eustace grasped the outstretched hand, and said:

"Now you must return to duty, and woe to the man who offers you a slight because I placed you under arrest. And, Enoch, I have a secret duty I wish you to perform, for I would rather intrust it to you than to either of the other officers."

"I am at your service, sir."

"I know it: now we will have breakfast, and then I will tell you of it."

The captain and his youthful lieutenant then sat down to their morning meal, and when the dishes were cleared away, Oliver Eustace said:

"We are now off Cape Sable, and heading south, and it is my intention to run close into the Maine coast and land you on a special mission, which I wish you to attend to for me."

"I will do all that I can, Captain Eustace."

"I know it, my boy, and you are the very one to intrust with the duty, for you are far in advance of your years in experience, and brave to recklessness."

"Now at the point I land you is a band of men who are nominally fishermen; but in reality they are smugglers, and really little better than pirates and wreckers, for they would capture a vessel of any nation, if they could do so, and have lured with lights upon the rocks, a number of crafts to destruction."

"Now this I well know, having myself gone ashore there in a schooner, some years ago, mistaking their false lights for a true one, and our cargo fell into their hands, I saving my life, with several others, by joining their band, from which I afterward escaped."

"Now it is my intention to attack their place of refuge, and for that reason I wish you to go there as a spy."

"In the first place you go in an open boat, pretending that your vessel went down at sea, and yourself and several of your comrades were left adrift in a yawl, and they dying of starvation and thirst you alone survived them, and you must play weak and sick."

"I will set you adrift at night so that the tide will bear you right upon their island, and once there you must join the band, and seem as evil as any of them."

"In this way you can gain their confidence, and discover their exact number, how many boats they have, where their booty is secreted, and then be in readiness to make your escape, for I will return for you in four weeks."

"Also learn the channel to the island thoroughly, so that you can run the schooner in at night, and after the fourth week repair every night between, midnight and two o'clock to the sea end of the island, where you will find a wild and rocky coast."

"One large rock, has a clump of rugged pines growing on the summit and here you must arrange to signal me, for I shall be off the coast within four weeks, or as soon after as I can, so keep a bright watch for me every night after that time, between the hours named, and when you see a vessel, a league out, burning three lights, one above the other, red white and blue, attached to the fore cross-trees, answer by showing the same signals on the rock, for the pines will prevent them from being seen from the island."

"As soon as I see your response I will answer by taking the blue light from the bottom and putting it on top, and the red one in its place, and then you will know that it is the schooner and must come out to us at once, for in some way you must get a boat; then you can pilot us in, and the island with its booty and prisoners will be ours; now, do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"And will go?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Then let us again talk over our plans," and for a long time Captain Eustace and his young lieutenant held converse together upon the dangerous mission that Enoch was to undertake, and which he was only too willing to do, as he was anxious to serve his country by aiding so materially in breaking up the desperate band of smugglers.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SMUGGLERS' ISLE.

A FEW nights after the conversation of Oliver Eustace and Enoch Blanchard in the Sea Wolf's cabin, a schooner stood close in toward the coast of Maine, about an hour before dawn, and then suddenly put about and headed seaward under a cloud of canvas.

The object of this strange maneuver was evident, when upon the dark waters was visible a small boat, containing but a single occupant.

Borne by the inflowing tide, the little yawl moved shoreward, and after an hour was near a rocky and forbidding coast, as seen by the light of day, for the east was growing rosy with the coming of the sun.

Far out upon the sea, as the occupant cast his eyes astern, was visible the schooner that had left him alone upon the waters, still standing oceanward, and ahead of him was the island-guarded, rock-bound coast.

The solitary personage in the boat was a youth of seventeen—in fact, in him, in spite of his disguise as a poor sailor and pale face, that had a suspicious look of being painted white, the reader could not fail to recognize Enoch Blanchard, and the dangerous duty he had undertaken is already known.

In the boat was a small leg-of-mutton sail, a short mast, two pairs of oars, and some few other things that one would think had been seized hastily from a sinking ship.

As he drew nearer the island, Enoch searched the shores narrowly, and discovered the huge rock, with its summit crowned by the clump of pine bushes, and other points which had been described to him by Oliver Eustace.

Finding that the current was carrying him directly upon the rocky shore, Enoch seized his oars and pulled hard against the tide, for he felt his danger; but he was in an irresistible current that drew him on in spite of himself, and directly toward a reef over which the water boiled with fury.

A fearless swimmer, he thought he would spring overboard and endeavor to elude the reef and land elsewhere; but he saw that he would be dashed upon the rocks and killed, so calmly awaited his fate in the boat.

It soon came, for the mad waters hurried his little craft on, forced it into the seething caldron, and hurled it upon the ragged reef, smashing it into atoms.

Though almost stunned by the shock, Enoch struck boldly out to struggle for life, and after a desperate effort cleared the rocks, and in a few moments more

landed upon the island, tired out, bruised and bleeding from a dozen cuts.

He had barely strength enough left to drag himself up to a place of safety beyond high tide mark, and then dropped down almost insensible.

"Well you are a lucky dog; I never knew any other man to strike the sea side of this island and live," said a rough voice, and glancing up with an effort, Enoch beheld before him a man, dressed in half-sailor, half-citizen attire, and with a face not at all prepossessing.

"What did you come here for, anyway; and where does you hail from?" continued the man, as Enoch made no reply to his first remark.

"I am, as you see, wrecked; I was adrift at sea, and endeavored to land on the island," said the youth, with an effort.

"And d—d if you didn't do it, too; but come, this island is private property, and you must go with me and see the boss—maybe you'll find out that you'd better drowned than come here; can you walk?"

"I'll try to if you only wait until I am rested."

"I'll wait; business ain't very brisk with me just now," and the man quietly sat down on a rock by the side of Enoch, who regarded him curiously, but was not at all taken aback at his words, as he was led by what Oliver Eustace had told him to suppose he had to face great dangers.

In a short while he signified his readiness to go, and with the aid of his rough-looking companion managed to pull himself up the hill, and then along a rocky pathway to the interior of the island, where, upon the banks of a stream, or rather channel, that ran through the isle, were a dozen rude huts, or shanties, more properly speaking.

A score of men, as rough-looking as Enoch's guide, were moving about, building fires and preparing to cook the morning meal, while a dozen boats, of all descriptions, from the light skiff to the large yawl, were hauled up on the shore, and in the inlet were visible, securely moored on account of the strong tide, that dashed like a mill-race through the island, half a dozen sailing crafts, from the cat-rig boat to the schooner of fifty tons.

Approaching one of the huts, in the door of which sat a tall, slender man, better dressed than his companions, and with an air of gentility about him, the guide said:

"Cap'n, I've fetched you a feller as came ashore on the sea-end, an' durned ef he didn't make it on a swim arter his boat was knocked to splinters."

The man took the pipe he was smoking from his mouth and glanced fixedly at the youth for a moment, and then said:

"You seem worsted by your shipwreck; sit down there," and he pointed to a rude chair, into which Enoch gladly sunk.

Then turning his head into the hut, the captain called out:

"Here, Buck, give this young man a glass of brandy."

A negro lad came out of the hut in obedience to the order, and handed the youth a cup nearly full of brandy, which he took and drank with a relish, as he sadly needed a stimulant.

"Now, sir, I suppose you have a story to tell me of how you were cast adrift in a boat, with a few companions, all of whom are dead but you, and that you are willing to join our band, and become like us, outlaws, smugglers, or anything else that is wicked," and the captain smiled, as he fastened his gaze upon Enoch, who was startled, for the man seemed to read his very thoughts.

"But, young sir, the one who sent you here should have told you not to approach the sea-end of this island, for that is a perfect caldron with the sea running in or out, and at slack water it is devilish risky to land there; but as you made the landing, I am convinced that you were not born to be drowned—you were reserved for a higher end, hanging."

"I do not understand you, sir; I was wrecked upon your island, and you threaten my life. Why is it?" calmly asked Enoch.

"Let us understand each other; you came here to betray us to our enemies. Do you deny it?"

Suffering from his cuts and bruises, and now thoroughly reckless, Enoch returned, tersely:

"I deny nothing."

"Good! Now, you came from one Oliver Eustace, at present the commander of the Sea Wolf, a privateer."

Enoch was astounded. Could this remarkable man read his thoughts?

How had he gained this knowledge, which he believed that only himself and Captain Eustace knew? Puzzled greatly, he replied:

"There is little use of my saying anything, as you seem to draw your own conclusions as to my coming here."

"Boy, I know all that you would tell me; you would have done well never to have come to this smugglers' island, for, in so doing, you sealed your doom. You must die!" and so saying the smuggler captain turned away, leaving Enoch a prey to the most painful thoughts.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SMUGGLER'S STORY.

For several days after his interview with the smuggler captain, Enoch lay a prisoner in the island "lock-up," his meals brought him by the negro lad, Buck, and his wounds dressed by an old man, who showed a sympathy in action, but not in words, for the youth.

As for the negro, Enoch could not get him to open his lips upon any subject. He seemed deaf to all inquiries, and would have been believed dumb, had he not been heard singing loudly when about his work.

At length, Enoch felt well enough to look about

him for some means of escape; he was among desperate men, and their captain had plainly told him he must die, so he was determined to get away, if he could, at any risk.

One day, as he sat in his prison, trying to concoct some plan, the door opened, and the captain crossed the threshold.

"Well, sir, are you well enough to suffer your doom?" he asked, sternly.

"The better a man's health is the more he hates to die," answered the youth, quietly.

"You are game, at any rate, and it is a pity to have to kill you."

"What have I done to merit death at your hands?"

"Nothing; only our band is bound together with pledges that it is death to violate, and one of our number has decreed that you must die; and it is our duty to execute his wish."

"A strange compact this, where one man governs the majority."

"Yes; but any one of us holds the same power—for instance, if you were my enemy and I was absent from this island, and in some way sent you here to get rid of you, those here at the rendezvous, even though there was but one, would be bound to take your life to keep his oath to the members of the compact."

"And has one of your number decreed that I must die?" asked Enoch, with sudden interest and surprise.

"Assuredly; otherwise you would have been treated as other men, shipwrecked on this island, have been treated."

"How is that?"

"Been allowed to join the band."

"And if I refused?"

"Death would have been the penalty. You must see that we lead a lawless life here; our island is the depot of smuggled goods between the British possessions and the United States, and in carrying on our trade, we are frequently compelled to lay violent hands upon life and property, and the result is we run our heads into the hangman's noose, and can, of course, allow no traitors in our camp; hence, our severe laws."

"Now I have belonged to this band for ten years, and for five months I have been its leader, for each member becomes its chief in turn, holding the office for six months: in another month I give way to another, and so on, and this law prevents any one man from putting on airs, as when he drops back into the ranks one whom he has injured, when he becomes chief, may punish him."

"You see that I talk plainly to you; but as you die to-morrow, there can be no harm, so I entertain you all I can."

"It is kind of you: I have heard your laws were strict in the extreme—that is, the laws of the coast smugglers—and they certainly conceal their retreats well, as for years there was a cavern rendezvous within a few miles of my home, and if one of their number had not betrayed his comrades, they might have been there yet."

"How long ago was that, young man?"

"Nearly two years: it was on the coast not very far from Boston."

"Yes, I have been there: it was Dirk Douglass who betrayed us, for that party were of our band, and they were to have come here, had they not been captured. You say you live near their old retreat?"

"Yes; I was born within a few miles of it."

"Your name, boy?"

"Enoch Blanchard."

"Great Heaven! Are you a son of Captain Martin Blanchard?" asked the man, excitedly.

"I am; but my father is dead," sadly said the youth.

"Dead: poor Captain Blanchard; boy, I knew your father well—ay, and when you were a lad of five years, I have taken you up to the mast-head with me time and again."

"Your father sailed on the bark Cyclops then, and I was his third-mate; but I fell from grace afterward. I loved liquor, and it caused me to take life one day without provocation, and I was thrown in prison in a foreign port and sentenced to be shot; but your father saved my life, by coming into prison to see me, with a couple of his crew, and he made me take his place and walk out, and I was saved."

"Then he called to the jailer, told him of my escape, and offered to sail that night and carry him with him, if he would go."

"The Monte Videan knew it was death to remain, after the escape of his prisoner, and consented: thus we all got away, and though a cruiser was sent after the Cyclops, they never caught us."

"Of course I could not return in the vessel to America, fearing arrest, so I left the ship at Havana, and gradually drifted home, arriving in Boston a beggar and a vagabond."

"Well, the first person I met was your mother; she was shopping on Washington street with a lady friend, and she recognized me and gave me her purse, which had considerable gold in it; but I threw it away in drink, and then joined this band of smugglers, several of whom I accidentally saved—and you are the son of Martin Blanchard?"

The smuggler grasped Enoch's hand warmly, and the youth replied:

"And you are West Rankin—I remember you now; we were great friends when I was a little one."

"Yes, I am West Rankin, and we shall be great friends now;" and looking cautiously around him, he continued:

"Boy, if I was ten thousand times pledged, I would not raise hand against you—you shall leave this island to-night; but you must make me one vow."

"Name it."

"Never to betray aught I have said to you about this band."

"I swear it, by my father's memory."

"Enough, boy; you come of too true stock to ever tell a lie—you shall leave here this night, and with gold enough to see you through."

"I thank you from my heart; now, I beg that you answer me one question."

"If possible, I will."

"Who was the one member of your band who wished me killed?"

"I will tell you; now, he is only an honorary member, for when any man can do better away, we let him go; but he is still held by our laws, and almost invariably, after a few years, he is sure to return worse off than when he left; the one who is your bitter enemy was wrecked off this coast years ago, and willingly joined our band, for we saved his life."

"Two years ago he left it, and has since been doing well, as he made a successful cruise, and wrote me a few weeks ago that he was the commander of a fine little vessel."

"It was in that letter that he said he would send to the island one who was his enemy—one he wished slain—and that he would send him in a boat on the sea end of the isle, and if not killed on the rocks, that we must put him to death, for he wished you to die."

"Last night we saw the schooner come near in shore, and then stand seaward, and the signal agreed upon in our member's letter was displayed, and we knew that you had been shipped to your doom; but with the tide running in as it did, we never expected to see you alive."

Enoch Blanchard was terribly moved by all he heard; now he could no longer doubt, and conquering his feelings, he told West Rankin the history of his life, and of the strange behavior of the man whom all at Sea View Cottage had so completely trusted.

"Enoch, there is some dark mystery at the foot of all this; now, I must leave you, but to-night I will return and aid you to escape; once free from here, my advice is to place your mother and sister out of harm's way, and then, with power enough to do your work well, hunt down Oliver Eustace, and if he is proven guilty of treachery to you, visit your vengeance upon him."

Without another word the smuggler captain left the hut, and Enoch Blanchard was alone with his own thoughts, which, as the reader may infer, were none of the pleasantest kind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNMASKED.

TRUE to his word, West Rankin entered the cabin where Enoch Blanchard was a prisoner, just at ten o'clock.

On the island but two guards were kept on duty at a time—one on a high hill that commanded the approach by sea and shore, for the mainland was about a league distant, and the other in the immediate camp, who watched the prisoners in the lock-up, and called the other guards at the proper hour.

The prison-pen in which Enoch was confined was a small hut built of large logs, unhewn, and was about ten feet square; it had two holes for windows, and one stout door opening toward the camp.

Long before Captain Rankin put in an appearance, Enoch had heard the smugglers making jolly over a supper washed down with liquor, and then followed a long silence.

"Well, Enoch, my boy, the boys are all drunk for I gave them a treat in honor of my birthday; not that it is within five months of that time, but then I said it was for the occasion, and here I am to free you, for the fellows would have the guards in, and so we have nothing to fear—come."

Opening the door he led the way out, and down to the channel that ran through the island.

"Here is a little craft that is as stiff as a church steeple in a blow; it is, as you see, sloop-rigged, and will carry you well."

"I have already stowed its locker with provisions for ten days, a cask of water, a musket, pistol and knife, and that roll on the seat contains clothing and wraps, so you are fixed; get in."

Enoch silently obeyed, and the smuggler followed him, having cast loose the painter; then the little craft was seized by the outflowing tide, and borne swiftly down the channel, when, after the distance of half a mile, it came to the border of the island.

Turning the sloop in shore with his oar, the smuggler sprang out, and held his hand forth toward the youth.

"Enoch, my boy, good-by; and don't think unkindly of me."

"I fear you will get into trouble about this," said the youth.

"Not I; the boys are dead drunk, for I drugged the liquor, and I will cover up my tracks well; there will be no one to blame; but, boy, the sight of you has done my heart good, and set me to thinking, and I am determined to cut the life I lead, and try and become honest, for I was born to better luck, and in England have a mother and sisters."

"As I am English, I will go with my countrymen, and when I next run down to Halifax will look up a berth upon one of His Majesty's cruisers; but I won't detain you, Enoch; there is your compass, and by it a dark lantern already lighted—stand due south from here for a league, and then you'll clear the reefs and small islands; then head due east until you get an offing, and you have a fair breeze along shore—good-by."

The youth wrung the hand of the kind-hearted smuggler, and hoisted his jib and mainsail, which were immediately filled by the four-knot breeze, and

away dashed the little sloop, leaving West Rankin standing alone upon the island shore.

Following the directions of his old friend, Enoch soon gained an offing, and putting his little vessel before the wind, headed along the coast, determined to make Portland.

With early dawn he found that West Rankin had well supplied him with provisions and clothing, and a leather purse, in the center of the bundle, contained half a hundred dollars in gold.

In good time Enoch arrived in Portland, just at sunset, and landing under the shadow of the old fort, he sprang ashore, one of two seamen standing there making his painter fast.

"You are captain, mate and crew of your craft, young man," said the other seaman, pleasantly, turning upon the youth.

"Yes, and the whole partnership wish to sell out the stock in the sloop; do you want to buy?" answered Enoch in the same tone.

"Blast my eyes! if you ain't Enoch Blanchard, may I go to Davy Jones with my boots on."

The youth quickly turned upon the speaker—the man who had kindly made his boat fast—and a glad look came into his face, and his hand was outstretched at once.

"Gil Saunders, as I live."

"I'm that same boy, Master Enoch, who sailed with your father many a long viage, and nussed you when you was a leetle babby; but—" and the man's face changed color, his brow darkened, and he continued in a hoarse tone:

"I guesses I'd best not let my tongue slip the cable about the old man; it's bad enough for you to know he's dead, 'thout tellin' you how he died."

Enoch Blanchard was struck by the tone and manner of the man; he knew that he had sailed on the Light-Wing the last cruise his father had made, and he put the question directly to him:

"Gil Saunders, what know you of my father's death?"

"I'm a durned fool; if I cud I'd git ahind myself and kick the dust out o' the seat o' my trowsers with my foot—durn me."

"This is no answer to my question: what know you of my father's death?"

"You've got among the breakers, shipmate, so you'd better beat out as best you can," said the other man.

Gil Saunders looked from one to the other of the two before him, a curious look upon his face; then he said:

"I knows all about it, Master Enoch."

"Then I demand that you tell me all you know. How did my father die?"

"He was p'isoned," whispered the seaman.

"Poisoned! Oh, God, no! and by whom? or was it an accident?"

"Nary accident; it were done on purpuss."

"Who did this foul deed?" and Enoch Blanchard trembled violently.

"I guesses I mout as well tell ye, Master Enoch, seein' as he went back on me, as he did do, for you see I was to be bo'sen of the skunner when she were made into a privateer; but blast my eyes ef he didn't send me off on a tomfool cruise to look up smugglers, and then put to sea; if it hadn't been for this shipmate here, who read me ther news o' ther sailin' of ther skunner, armed an' manned, I'd been lookin' for smugglers yit; but you see I got too much grog aboard, spent all my money, and lay to here until this shipmate run across my bows, and he giv me a lift, and we've bin cruisin' in company ever since; but our lockers is gettin' mighty low."

"Gil Saunders, it is a lucky thing for you that you did get drunk; I was sent to hunt up those very smugglers, and I found them."

"I was sent there to die, and by none other than him whom my father trusted—Oliver Eustace."

"Oliver Eustace!"

It was the companion of Gil Saunders who uttered the name.

"Yes; do you know aught of him?"

"Is he alive?"

"He is; I left him two weeks since, the commander of the schooner Sea Wolf."

"Great Heaven! how strange all this is; I believed that man dead—nay, had I met him face to face, I would not have believed my own eyes," said the strange seaman, excitedly.

"Do you know aught of that man?" again asked Enoch.

"Ay, do I; I met him, as I met Gil here, and did him a good turn, and he told me a sad story of how he had been cheated of his inheritance; his father had died, he said, believing him dead, and had willed his property to designing kinsmen."

"Sorry for him, I entered into a plan to go with him—I am going to tell the truth now, shipmates, even if I get into trouble by it."

"Go on; what you tell me I will keep sacredly," said Enoch.

"Well, I entered into a plan to go with him down the coast, anchor off his old home, and let him get what gold he could from his evil kinsman, he telling me he could do it without detection, and I not very correct in my morals, seeing no harm in his taking that which was his own, and which he had been cheated out of."

"Well, we went to the old place on the coast—now nearly two years ago, and we got considerable gold and silver plate; but we were discovered, and Oliver Eustace shot down one of the men who came upon us."

"The other seized me, and to escape, now that blood had been shed, I fired upon my assailant, and we got to our vessel, a little sloop that belonged to me."

"Not getting all that he had expected, and perfectly reckless, my companion urged that I should

put in shore and that we should rob the house of an old sea captain that lived near the coast, and who, Eustace said, always kept his money in his house."

"But I had had enough for one night; I was distressed at the turn affairs had taken, and I refused."

"In a frenzy he attacked me, and after a desperate struggle I hurled him overboard, and as soon as I could get up, sailed away believing him dead; now you tell me that he lives?"

"Yes, I saved his life; I was running home, from town, in my little sloop, heard a hail in the water and picked him up, so nearly dead that he was unconscious when I hauled him in the boat."

"We cared for him through his illness, believed his plausible story of having fallen overboard from a coaster, and my parents having known him years before felt sorry for his misfortunes and my father made him first mate of his vessel; in return Gil tells me he poisoned my father."

"He did sartin; he ust to put p'ison in his tea and coffee, and in his grog, but in mighty small doses."

"I caught him at it, watched him, but kept my tongue at anchor about the false colors he was showin', an' one day he caught me watchin' him, an' we comed to a understandin'. I was to get so much gold, an' I got it an' spent it, an' I was to be bos'en of the new skunner—that is the skunner when she was a privateer, an' he put to sea 'thout me, as you know."

Enoch Blanchard remained in silent thought a moment, while the twilight shadows deepened around him, then he said in a low tone:

"Shipmates, this is my sloop, and I have gold to store it with provisions; but I need a crew now, as I do not care to sell; will you ship with me, and I promise you a good berth and fair wages?"

"I'll foller you to Hell Columby, Master Enoch," blantly said Gil Saunders.

"And Bill Brentford won't say nay, sir; when do we sail?"

"To-morrow morning, Gil, you stay here and keep an eye on the sloop, while Brentford and myself go after provisions," and the two walked up the hill into the town; but in a couple of hours they returned laden down with supplies, and having gotten the "kits" of the two seamen from their lodging place, Enoch Blanchard hoisted sail and stood out of Portland harbor with the ebb tide.

CHAPTER XIX.

BLACK DICK HAS A STORY TO TELL.

THE little sloop on its voyage from Portland had a long and rough run of it, for a storm set in shortly after leaving port, and lasted for days; but Enoch Blanchard was a skillful commander, and his crew of Gil Saunders and Brentford, aided him all in their power, and at last the coast was sighted not far from Sea View Cottage.

It was just dawn when the sloop ran alongside the pier in the cove, and Enoch bounded ashore to suddenly confront Black Dick, the hired man.

"Wall, Massa Enoch, I is most telighted ter see you, sah; but you finds de ole cottage a heap of ruins, sah!"

"In God's name, what do you mean, Dick?" and without waiting for a reply, Enoch rushed up the hill to where he could obtain a view of his home.

It was true. The chimneys alone remained—the cottage was in ashes.

Trembling in every limb, he again turned to Dick.

"My sister! my mother! where are they?"

"Is safe, sah, as I was gwine to discuss to you, when you run off like a dog wid a kettle to his tail, sah."

"Safe—but where?"

"I'll done tole you all, sah. You see, a week ago de Sea Wolf comed here—"

"That man again!"

"No, sah; dat boat, de schooner, sah. Wall, de capt'n he axes Miss Lulu for to marry him, that she might go an' see you, sah, whom he say was wounded an' ashore up de coast; an' Miss Lulu was goin' to do it, but one of de sailors tells me to tell her not to go, kase the captain didn't mean right toward her, an' I tole her; not dat she was goin' to marry him, but she was gwine to go to be your nuss till you was well, sah."

"When I tells her what de sailor say, she gets mighty white, and den she tells him, de capt'n, if he loves her he will go an' fetch her brudder home, but dat she won't go."

"Wall, sah, de capt'n smile like a angil, an' say he do so to once, kase I was waitin' on de table an' see him, an' arter supper he puts to sea, I goin' down to de pier to carry some t'ings Missis had gi'n him for you an' for hisself."

"Wall, sah, he seem mighty mad, for he cuss de men in de boat, and didn't spoke to me good-by when I bow perlite to him."

"Den de schooner go to sea, an' de next day de brig come in—"

"What brig, Dick?"

"De Wasp, sah, Capt'n Blakely de capt'in, an' Massa Lootenant Meredith de fust lootenant, sah; wall, de Wasp comed into de cove heah, an' Massa Meredith comed ashore, an' he tole Missis an' Missy Lulu to come right down to he house an' stay, as de cottage was unpertected; but de smuggler's cliff was to be a fort, an' de sogers was to be dah, an' so as how on dat account his house was de safe place, an' he say as he hopes dat Missy Lulu lib dar fer ebber; but he tole her dis quiet-like, you know, Massa Enoch."

"And my mother and sister are now at Meredith's home, Dick?"

"Dey is, sah, an' it are well for dem dey is, for, de very night dey left, de Britishers comed in de cove, an' sot de cottage on fire."

"The British landed and burned the cottage, you say, Dick?"

"Yas, sah; dere was a vessil comed in de basin at night, an' de crew landed, an' arter dey rob de cottage dey burn it down to de groun', sartin; dar de chimleys, sah, an' de ashes."

"One vessel came in, you say?"

"Yes, sah; a schooner, 'case I see her far off on de horizon in de mornin', when I comed here."

"It was the Sea Wolf!" muttered Enoch, between his teeth. "Oh, Oliver Eustace! I have a deadly debt to settle with you!"

Then turning to the negro, he continued:

"Where is the Wasp now, Dick?"

"She anchored in de harbor in front of Massa Meredith's manshum. I left her dar dis mornin', when I comed away."

"Come, Dick, get into the sloop with me; I am going down to the Meredith mansion."

Struck by the stern manner of the youth Black Dick obeyed, and casting loose from the pier, Enoch stood rapidly out of the basin, his brow clouded, his eyes full of fire, and his lips compressed.

A run of an hour, under pressure of a seven-knot breeze, brought Enoch's little sloop within sight of what was now called Meredith's Harbor, and close in shore was visible, over the earthen elbows of the haven, the rigging of a vessel-of-war.

"The Wasp is still there, thank God!" cried Enoch, earnestly, and rounding the point of land he headed directly for the vessel.

"Lads, you are my friends, and I have brought you with me to ship on the Wasp. Where I go, you go; you understand?" said Enoch to his two faithful followers.

"Ef it's to ther devil, begging your parding, Master Enoch, for thinkin' as how you would go there," said Gil Saunders, earnestly, while Brentford returned quietly:

"I will stick with you, Mr. Blanchard, in foul weather as well as fair."

"I believe you, lads. Hark! they hail us from the brig!"

"Sloop ahoy!" came floating across the waters.

"Ahoy the Wasp!" replied Enoch Blanchard; and then he continued:

"I wish to come aboard; I would see Lieutenant Meredith."

"Who asks for me?" said a voice on board, and Wayne Meredith's handsome face peered over the high bulwarks, while he cried, joyously:

"Enoch Blanchard, as I live! Come on board, my boy, and you'll get a hearty welcome!"

As Enoch went over the gangway the young lieutenant grasped his hand, and turning to a gentleman in the uniform of a captain, he said:

"This is my young friend, Enoch Blanchard, Captain Blakely, of whom we have often spoken."

"You are welcome, sir, on board the Wasp. We were told that you were seriously wounded, and your mother and sister are most anxious about you; but you look pale; come into the cabin and have a glass of wine;" and taking Enoch's arm, the kind and gallant Captain Johnston Blakely* led him into the handsome cabin of the Wasp.

Having swallowed a glass of golden sherry, Enoch said:

"Pardon my haste, captain, but I came on board to make known to Lieutenant Meredith some remarkable and painful circumstances, and I am glad you are here, sir, to hear them also, for I am going to ask your advice in the matter, and also your services in carrying out a plan I have in mind."

"In any way I can serve you, Blanchard, as Meredith's friend I will gladly do so."

"I thank you, sir," and in as few words as possible Enoch Blanchard made known all with which the reader is already acquainted regarding the career of Oliver Eustace, excepting stating at what part of the coast was the smugglers' island, and compromising Brentford in the robbery of the Meredith mansion; but he stated that Brentford's life had been attempted by Captain Eustace, and to save himself he had hurled the treacherous man into the sea, and believed him dead up to his meeting with Enoch in Portland.

"These two men, Brentford and Saunders, are now with me in my sloop, and if you will accept them, with me, Captain Blakely, we will try and prove that we are at least good seamen, for I am in hopes you will conclude to pursue the Sea Wolf, as in my mind there is no doubt but that Captain Eustace landed at the cottage the other night, to carry off my sister, and set the house on fire to cover up his tracks, and in revenge when he found it vacated, hoping that it would be believed the work of the English."

"I agree with you, Enoch; for though the man is my cousin, he is certainly a very devil," said Wayne Meredith.

"Well, Blanchard, as soon as you have passed an hour or so with your mother and sister—Meredith will take you to them," and the captain smiled knowingly, "I will get up anchor and go in pursuit of this imp of Satan, and you shall have the birth of junior lieutenant on the Wasp until after his capture; if your men are the plucky fellows you give them credit for, there are two gunner's places vacant for them to fill."

Enoch Blanchard thanked Captain Blakely again and again for his kindness, and then the three set out for the shore, for the commander of the Wasp readily yielded to the requests of the young officers to go and dine with them at the mansion.

* Captain Johnston Blakely, of the Wasp, 18 guns, was a most gallant officer, and a hero of the war of 1812. In June—28th—1814 he captured, after a desperate action, in latitude 48° 36' North, longitude 17° 15' West, the British ship Reindeer, 18 guns, commanded by Captain William Manners.—THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER XX.

THE BITER BITTEN.

OF the meeting between Enoch and his mother and sister, the joy of the reunion, and their distress at all they heard of the treachery and crime of Oliver Eustace, I will not speak, but leave to the reader's imagination, as I will also the tempting dinner that the five sat down to in the Meredith mansion, Wayne insisting that Captain Blakely should take the head and Mrs. Blanchard the foot of the table, which they did.

At length a glass of wine to the success of the cruise was drank, tearful farewells were said, and the three sailors went on board the Wasp, which at once got up anchor and stood seaward under full sail.

The third day after leaving Meredith Harbor, Enoch Blanchard, who was constantly on the watch, descried a vessel creeping close in shore, as if to avoid being seen, for the Wasp was within three leagues of the coast.

Turning his glass upon her for an instant, he suddenly dropped it from his eyes and cried in ringing tones, for he was at the time officer of the deck:

"Sail ho! Sea Wolf ho! All hands ahoy to make sail! Quartermaster, let her fall off dead before the wind!"

Instantly all was excitement on the Wasp, for the crew knew the object of the cruise, and out of the cabin hastened Captain Blakely and Wayne Meredith.

"Captain Blakely, there is the schooner; we are now heading to cut her off—see, just under the land there?"

"I see a schooner there; but are you certain it is the Sea Wolf, Blanchard?" said the captain.

"I am, sir; there is one seaman here who was on her for nearly eighteen months; send Gunner Saunders here, Mr. Willis, and Enoch turned to a dashing young midddy, who quickly gave the order.

"Take this glass, Saunders, and say if yonder craft in shore is the schooner you sailed in with Captain Oliver Eustace?" and Captain Blakely handed the gunner the glass.

One long look through it, and Gil Saunders said, with more warmth than elegance:

"If it hain't, I hope I may be damned; beggin' yer parding, sir for lettin' my tongue slip its cable with a cuss word, as is forbid in the Almighty's log-book; but I'm d—d ef that hain't the craft as we is s'archin' for."

"I am obliged to you, Saunders; go forward, and you may soon have a chance to set your bull-dog on the schooner—you shall have the first shot."

"Thankee, sir; I hates to turn iron ag'in' my old sea sweetheart, but as she's waltzed off into bad company, 'tain't my fault, an' I'll do my duty, sir," and Gil Saunders went forward to his post as gunner of the fore-castle pivot-gun.

"He sees we are after him and is trying to get away; see, he is cracking on canvas," said Wayne Meredith.

"Captain, yonder schooner is marvelously fast, and Oliver Eustace is a tricky and skillful seaman, so I would like to offer a suggestion, if you will pardon it," said Enoch, politely.

"Certainly, Blanchard."

"Well, sir, as Captain Eustace hails as an American privateer, he will not run away from an American cruiser, when he knows us to be such, and would it not be a good idea to show our colors and that will check his flight, and we can then signal to him to lay to, and come on board, and you can get him and the schooner without a shot?"

"The very thing; and you shall play captain of the Wasp, for you are about my size and can slip on my uniform and receive him, while Meredith and myself are in my state-room, listening to what is said; Midshipman Willis can meet him at the gangway and conduct him to you."

Thus it was arranged, and in an hour's time the Wasp ran up the stars and stripes, and fired a gun to leeward.

The schooner, now a league distant, instantly sent the American flag to the peak, and saluted it with one gun.

"Signal our name, and call him on board, Mr. Meredith," said Captain Blakely.

The order was obeyed, and a moment after the schooner headed toward the Wasp.

"There is no doubt, Blanchard, about that being your schooner?"

"None whatever, Captain Blakely—it is the Sea Wolf."

"Then go below and promote yourself to a captaincy—your visitor shall soon be with you," laughed Captain Blakely, and as the schooner rounded to, half a dozen cable lengths from the Wasp, Wayne Meredith and his commander also went below.

In a quarter of an hour more a boat pulled alongside the Wasp, and Enoch heard the schooner's captain received at the gangway with all honors.

Seated at the table he calmly awaited the visitor, his face deadly pale, for he was to meet the murderer of his father, the one who had attempted his own life, and would have dragged his beautiful sister down to shame.

Two forms darkened the cabin companionway and Midshipman Willis said in a loud voice:

"Captain Oliver Eustace, of the American Privateer schooner Sea Wolf, Captain Blanchard" and the jolly midddy laid particular emphasis upon the title before Enoch's name.

The name caused Oliver Eustace to start, and as his eyes met the youthful face of Enoch Blanchard, his dark visage grew ashen in hue; but recovering himself quickly, he said, extending his hand:

"My brave boy, you the commander of the Wasp, when I believed you on Smuggler's Island, whither I was now bound."

"Sit down, Oliver Eustace, or your craven legs may refuse to support you when you hear what I have to say," said the youth in tones so stern and deep that the guilty man mechanically sunk into a chair at his side, while his hand sought the breast of his coat.

Enoch saw the movement, and said calmly:

"You are covered, sir, by half a dozen marines in yonder cabin, so withdraw your hand and deliver up the weapon it rests on."

With a curse the man obeyed, laying the pistol upon the table, and Enoch drew it toward him.

"What means this treatment of me, Enoch?" suddenly burst from the lips of Oliver Eustace.

"I will tell you—first, I accuse you of piracy upon the high seas."

"It is false," shrieked the man, half-starting from his chair.

"It is true; two days ago we overhauled an American clipper-ship that a schooner, answering your vessel's description, but professing to be the English privateer schooner *Dominica*, had boarded and robbed of all that was valuable on board, and sent, under a prize crew into Halifax harbor."

"You cannot prove that it was I that took the ship."

"Mr. Willis, send the mate of the American ship Dart here."

"He is here, sir," and the Middy ushered in a stout red-faced man."

"This, Captain Eustace, is the mate of the Dart, whom we took from the ship to face you. Mr. Benedict, is this the officer who captured your vessel?" and Enoch turned to the mate, who answered bluntly:

"That's him, I'll take my oath."

Oliver Eustace turned a shade whiter as he saw the mate, but he said nothing.

"Mr. Benedict, you may retire, please, and ask the seaman Watson to come here."

"Ay, ay, sir," and the next moment a weather-beaten old tar stood in the spot just occupied by the mate of the Dart, and he leered curiously at Oliver Eustace, whose dark face grew more ashen in hue.

"Your name is Watson, I believe?" questioned Enoch.

"It are, sir."

"You shipped as first-class seaman on the schooner Sea Wolf, at Halifax, six weeks ago, I believe?"

"True as Scriptur, sir."

"You shipped, believing the schooner to be an English privateer?"

"D—d true, sir."

"Since you shipped on the Sea Wolf, how many prizes have been taken?"

"Three, sir, countin' the clipper-ship Dart, sir."

"What flags were they under?"

"The Dart and the Mischievous Mollie were under the American flag, sir; the Princess was sailin' under the British, sir."

"Did you give chase to any other vessels?"

"Yes, sir, to a French brigantine, but a storm came up and we lost her in the darkness."

"In capturing the American vessels what flag was the Sea Wolf under?"

"The English flag, sir."

"In taking the Princess what colors were hoisted on the schooner?"

"The American, sir."

"When you gave chase to the French brigantine, what ensign was at the schooner's peak?"

"The capt'in's colors, sir—no other."

"Describe that flag, Watson."

"It are a black field with a red kind o' animile crouchin' in it; the lads say it are a picture of a wolf, but never havin' see'd one o' them varmints, I can't give it as Gospel truth, sir."

"All right, Watson, that will do—no, hold a minute: you were sent on the Dart as one of the prize crew, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, I were."

"You were in the schooner when she landed a week since and at night burned a cottage on the sea-side?"

"I were, sir; an' I was with her when the capt'in landed a few days before, an' I told a nigger as I gin a chaw o' terbaccy, to tell his young missus not to trust the capt'in."

"It was very kind of you, and you shall not go unwarded; now you can return to the deck."

"Thankee, sir," and with a bow to Enoch and a leer at the now thoroughly frightened Eustace, the old seaman left the cabin.

"You see, sir, I have proven you a pirate; now I accuse you of being a murderer—Gil Saunders, come in here."

The guilty man now looked ten years older; his face was haggard, his eyes became sunken, and he trembled violently as his gaze fell upon the seaman who then entered.

"Gil Saunders, you accuse this man of murder?" and Enoch's voice was quivering.

"I do—durned ef I don't."

"Who did he murder?"

"One o' the truest men as ever trod a deck—Martin Blanchard, sir, your father, Master Enoch."

"You saw him commit the deed?"

"Yes, sir, he p'isened him—he did, sir, an' I've not been so friendly with grog sin' I see him put p'isen in it, sir; he's a snake in the grass, he is, is that same Oliver Eustace."

"That is sufficient, Saunders, you may retire."

"I'll go an' git the rope ready, sir, to hang him with," and the old sailor departed.

"This is enough, Oliver Eustace, unless you wish me to have you face one who knows you as a midnight robber, who took life to save your own wretched self from capture."

"Once I saved your life, and in return for it you

endeavored to have me slain, as you well know, when you sent me to the smugglers' island; and I feel that it was you, or your hired assassin, who attempted the life of your kinsman, Wayne Meredith; but now I know you as you are—a robber, a pirate, a traitor, and the cruel murderer of my father, and upon you I shall visit my revenge."

"I am but a boy in years, Oliver Eustace, but I am a man in hate; and I now condemn you to be hung at the yard-arm of the schooner you robbed me of."

"Mercy, Enoch Blanchard! I will confess all and be your slave, if you will spare me," groaned the unhappy wretch, dropping upon his knees before the youth.

But Enoch Blanchard's face was as white and cold as marble, as he replied:

"No, I have no mercy for you, Oliver Eustace. *This day, at sunset, you die!*"

The guilty man fell forward, half-stunned by the shock, and writhed in anguish at his fate.

"Mr. Willis, have this man ironed heavily, and held on deck until the schooner is in our possession. Captain Blakely and Lieutenant Meredith, have I done right?" and Enoch turned toward the two officers, who just then came from the state-room.

"You have," they both answered, in a breath; and without a glance at Oliver Eustace, the three went on deck, and with a boat's crew, well armed, Enoch Blanchard went on board the schooner, the Wasp standing down toward the little vessel with her guns run out and crew at quarters.

Beholding who it was that boarded them, and noticing that their captain was not with him, and the hostile attitude of the Wasp, the two officers, Milroy and Talmadge, knew that they were entrapped, and quietly surrendered their swords, and Enoch Blanchard was master of his own vessel.

Shortly after another boat came alongside from the Wasp, and it contained Captain Blakely, Wayne Meredith, and Oliver Eustace in irons.

As the sun was near the western horizon, preparations were at once made for the execution of Oliver Eustace, and the crew called to quarters to witness it.

Still acting as commander, Enoch Blanchard ordered the guilty wretch to be swung up into mid-air, and the tightening noose around his neck strangled the shrieks for mercy of the man who had to others never shown mercy.

When the hanging form ceased to breathe, Enoch Blanchard turned to his commander:

"Captain Blakely, my duty has ended, sir. I thank you sincerely for your kindness, and offer the schooner to the navy, sir, as a vessel-of-war."

"You are a noble fellow, Blanchard, and I appoint Meredith as her captain and you as her first-lieutenant, and will give you a good crew from the Wasp, while there are, doubtless, many of the Sea Wolf's men who will be glad to serve under you in a legitimate cruise; but the officers and a few of the worst of the crew I will put in irons as prisoners-of-war."

The proposition was then made to the men of the Sea Wolf, and, to a man, they were anxious to serve as regular seamen, all professing innocence of having known the character of the schooner when they shipped, for the intended assassin of Wayne Meredith was on the Dart as one of the prize crew, fortunately for himself.

Such as Enoch felt that he could trust were accepted, and the remainder, with their officers, sent on board the Wasp in irons, while a young lieutenant, Midshipman Willis, and a score of honest tars, among whom were Brentford, Gil Saunders, and Watson, came on board as a prize-crew.

With the darkness the body of Oliver Eustace was cut down, sewed up in a hammock and thrown into the sea, and the two vessels separated forever—the luckless cruise of the Sea Wolf having ended, and the schooner under her new name of *Chasseur*, given her by Captain Blakely, sped away over the waters in quest of new adventures; an honest flag floating above her quarter-deck.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TWO SCHOONERS.

UPON a pleasant February afternoon in the year 1815, a large and beautiful schooner of war, flying the American flag, stood out of the harbor of Havana, and headed into the Gulf, apparently in pursuit of a sail far off on the blue horizon.

But when the graceful craft had gained a good offing, the stranger seemed to realize that he need not fly, and changing his course he stood on a tack that would bring the two vessels within hailing distance ere an hour had passed.

A fresh breeze was blowing, and the stranger, a schooner a trifle larger than the one that had come out of Havana, bowed merrily over the waters, the British ensign flying at the peak, and her crew of ninety men crowding her decks.

Upon the quarter-deck of the American schooner were her men, seventy-five in number, standing at their guns, and all was in readiness for action.

Upon the quarter-deck stood her commander, a handsome young fellow of twenty years of age, and possessing a daring, resolute face that had carried him safely through the years since the reader last beheld him, for I again present to them Enoch Blanchard, captain of the American privateer schooner *Chasseur*.

Nearer and nearer drew the two vessels together, until a puff of smoke burst from the bows of the English craft, and the sea combat was begun in desperate earnestness.

For one long terrible hour the battle lasted, both vessels manœuvred with wondrous skill, and giving and taking death-wounds without flinching from the fire.

But at length the American bore down upon the

Englishman, the grappling-irons were thrown, and Enoch Blanchard led two score of boarders upon his enemy's deck.

For five minutes the hand-to-hand fight lasted, and then the British flag was lowered—the gallant Englishman surrendered to his youthful foe.*

"Sir Vincent Revelle begs to surrender his sword and vessel to you, sir."

Enoch Blanchard turned upon the speaker—he knew the voice:

"West Rankin!"

"Enoch Blanchard!" and the two men grasped hands.

"You here, my old friend, an officer of this vessel?" continued Captain Blanchard.

"Yes, I told you I intended to lead a new life, and I have risen to be a lieutenant on this schooner."

"And Captain Revelle commands this vessel?" continued the surprised Enoch.

"Yes—there he stands!"

"Captain Revelle, keep your sword and your vessel, sir, for the service you once did for me."

"My boy duelist—by his majesty's crown!" and the two officers warmly grasped hands, while Sir Vincent continued:

"And you are the one who has fought yonder schooner so nobly and have been my conqueror? I told you you would make your mark in the world; but come in to my cabin."

For two hours the two vessels lay together, their crews repairing damages, and then they separated, the same flags flying above their decks that had floated there before the combat; for Enoch Blanchard would not hold the vessel of the noble and gallant Englishman who had befriended him in his duel with Major McCarthy.

CONCLUSION.

ONE year after the hard-fought war between the United States and Great Britain a party of three persons were seated upon the balcony of a fashionable hotel at a summer resort in France.

The trio consisted of two gentlemen and a lady, and they were registered on the hotel books as follows:

"Wayne Meredith, U. S. Navy.
"Mrs. Wayne Meredith, America.
"Enoch Blanchard, U. S. Navy."

Without having seen their names the reader would have recognized them as old friends by one glance into their faces, for excepting that Lulu had grown more beautiful, and Enoch more manly and handsome, they were the same.

Suddenly a gentleman passed along the balcony, a young and lovely maiden of seventeen upon his arm.

They were about to pass on, when the eyes of the stranger and Enoch Blanchard met, and both uttered an exclamation of pleasurable surprise.

"Captain Blanchard, I am delighted to meet you."

"The pleasure is mutual, I assure you, Captain Revelle."

"Thank you. But permit me the pleasure of presenting my daughter Blanche—Captain Enoch Blanchard."

"I am most happy to meet Captain Blanchard—his name has been daily upon my father's lips, and I have come to look upon him as a friend," and the beautiful maiden offered her hand to the young sailor, who said modestly:

"I am pleased to be remembered so kindly; but Sir Vincent, may I present my sister and my brother-in-law, Captain Meredith?"

"Assuredly," said the delighted Englishman, who could ill conceal his joy at meeting his "Boy Duelist," as he called Enoch.

From that day, Enoch Blanchard and Blanche Revelle were lovers; they could not help it, and it was right that such should be the case, that my romance of a boy's revenge, over half a century ago, should prove the truth of the old adage:

"All's well that ends well."

Exeunt Omnes.

*On February 26, 1815, the English schooner St. Lawrence, fifteen guns, was captured off Havana, by the American privateer schooner Chasseur, fourteen guns.—THE AUTHOR.

THE END.

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